Hafa Adai!

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IPI opposes Kan Pacific's request for writ of execution. PAGE 3

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Palacios, Gersh lead ribbon-cutting for $17.01M Route 36 project

FERDIE DE LA TORRE
Gov. Arnold I. Palacios, seventh from right, and Lt. Gov. David M. Apatang, sixth from right, lead the ribbon-cutting yesterday for the completed $17.01-million Route 36 Phase 2 construction of all-weather roadway along Windward/Chalan Kalabera Road located in the northeastern coast of Saipan.

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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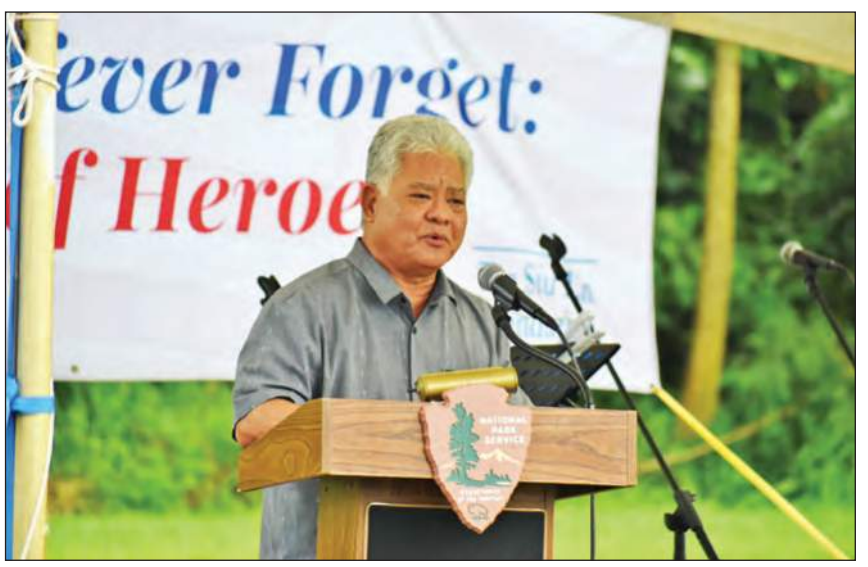
REPORTER

Gov. Arnold I. Palacios, Lt. Gov. David M. Apatang, and Federal Highway Administration-Hawaii Division Territorial representative Gabrielle Gersh led the ribbon-cutting yesterday for the completed $17.01-million Route 36 Phase 2 construction project located in the northeastern coast of Saipan.

Palacios in his remarks thanked Gersh for joining them in the ceremony held on a bridge at Unai Fanhang on Windward/

See PALACIOS on Page 4

'A catalyst to unite all Americans'



By CHRYSTAL MARINO
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CORRESPONDENT

Saipan honored the heroes of 9/11 with the yearly We Will Never Forget: Field of Heroes commemoration last Monday at the American Memorial Park's Court of Honor that was preceded by a Freedom March.

CHRYSTAL MARINO
Gov. Arnold I. Palacios said instead of sowing division and cause suffering, Sept. 11, 2001 served as a catalyst to unite all Americans during his remarks in last Monday's We Will Never Forget: Field of Heroes commemoration at the American Memorial Park.

Gov. Arnold I. Palacios led the ceremony at the Court of Honor and in his remarks shared, "The unprecedented act of violence committed [on Sept. 11, 2001] was meant to disrupt our way of life, destroy the fabric of what makes America a great nation, and

See ROUTE 36 on Page 4

Palacios feels pressured to re-connect with China market

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
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REPORTER

It is no secret that the CNMI's tourism industry continues to suffer absent the China market and Gov. Arnold I. Palacios is now feeling the pressure.

Recently, the Hotel Association of the Northern Marianas Islands has expressed its support of the Commonwealth Port Authority's initiative to obtain an exemption for the CNMI in regards to the U.S Department of Transportation's China Part Order 213 which imposes restrictions on the number of flights from

See MARKET on Page 4

Slew of potential candidates for soon-to-be vacated judge posts

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

Gov. Arnold I. Palacios said yesterday that he and Lt. Gov. David M. Apatang have yet to make a decision as to who they will appoint for the two judge positions.

Palacios said a slew of possible candidates came up such

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INSIDE

LOCAL
The 2023 Island Summer Auto Fest's Best of Show and first place in the VIP category went to Mia Le'lani and Team Exotic and Exotic Minis with their impressive 2007 Toyota Rumion.
PAGE 7

NATION
The U.S. approved updated COVID-19 vaccines Monday, hoping to rev up protection against the latest coronavirus strains.
PAGE 12

GOOD HOUSEKEEPING
At some point, every empty-nester faces the difficult task of strenuous winnowing of your child's left-behind items.
PAGE 14

SCAN ME WITH A COMPATIBLE QR READER TO KEEP UPDATED ON ALL THE LATEST NEWS.

Local

Resolution for retiree bonus or COLA referred to Senate panel

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

Sen. Paul A. Manglona (Ind-Rota) questioned Monday the need to adopt that day instead of referring it to the Senate Fiscal Affairs Committee first, a resolution that urges Gov. Arnold I. Palacios to reserve funds to provide a retiree bonus or Cost of Living Allowance to be distributed equally to all government retirees and CNMI Fund members receiving an annuity upon resolution of the CNMI's financial crisis.

"We all know that we always all support the retirees. But this is basically requesting the governor to provide the retiree bonus at a time we're working on the financial receivables and revenues," said Manglona during the Senate session.

Floor leader Sen. Corina L. Magofna (D-Saipan) moved for the adoption of Senate Resolution No. 23-10.

Senate President Edith E. DeLeon Guerrero (D-Saipan), who is the author of the resolution, said she does not have an issue referring it to the Fiscal Affairs Committee.

DeLeon Guerrero clarified that the resolution does actually give the governor the opportunity to provide a retiree bonus or COLA.

She said the resolution also specifically talks about receiving an annuity upon resolution of the CNMI's financial crisis.

Manglona said he just feels like the need to refer the resolution to the Fiscal Affairs Committee and report it out on the next session so that they can all feel comfortable that when they pass such a resolution that they're giving full confidence to the retirees that there is potentially such funding so that they can give them the bonus.

"I totally agree that they have not gotten bonus for several years already and that something that the government acknowledge each time they entertain our fiscal plans," Manglona said.

He said does not know if it would hurt to give the resolution to the committee and have them report back.

The resolution was referred to Fiscal Affairs Committee chaired by Sen. Donald M. Manglona (Ind-Rota).

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Saipan Tribune was among the most frequently used and trusted local news sources among CNMI residents surveyed
02
72%
of CNMI residents surveyed perceived the Saipan Tribune to be "trustworthy" or "very trustworthy"
03
of CNMI residents surveyed reported using Saipan Tribune "often" or "all the time" as a local news source
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SMA claims over 800% increase in airport fess seen in last 3 years

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
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REPORTER

Star Marianas Airlines claims that in the last three years, after the Commonwealth Ports Authority terminated the Airport Use Agreement back in 2021, the CNMI's sole inter-island airline has experienced an over 800% increase in airport fees for use of the Saipan commuter terminal.

In a statement from SMA president Shaun Christian, he said CPA made a unilateral decision back in 2021 to terminate the long-standing Airport Use Agreement which he claims has been instrumental in controlling costs and expenditures related to air travel in the CNMI.

Because of the termination of the AUA, SMA has seen an over 800% increase in landing fees.

"This decision has led to an astonishing 877% increase in landing fees alone. The ramifications of this decision are profound and have far-reaching consequences for travelers and airlines alike."

Christian said the AUA is essentially an agreement between CPA and airlines operating in the CNMI which was designed to ensure fairness, transparency, and require cost controls for expenditures by the CPA.

"It contained provisions for cost limitations and price caps that could be assessed to passengers and airlines, thus ensuring a balanced and sustainable approach to air travel costs," he said.

But in 2021, CPA replaced the AUA with a rate-setting methodology which now, as seen with the recently adopted budget, is calculated based on factors like the number of airlines coming in.

"However, without any consultation or consideration of objections raised by the airlines, the CPA decided to replace this agreement with a new rate-setting methodology. This new approach lacks the critical cost controls that were an integral part of the previous agreement, leaving airlines and passengers vulnerable to unchecked fee increases," Christian said.

To put things in perspective, under the terminated Airport Use Agreement, landing fees for inter-island flights were set at a maximum rate of $1.06 per 1,000 lbs of landed weight, and could be further reduced for increased activity.

With the imposition of the new pricing method, these fees skyrocketed to $9.15 per 1,000 lbs of landed weight, an increase of 877%.

"To put this into perspective, for inter-island travel, airlines that previously paid $7.60 for each landing must now fork out a staggering $66.80 for each and every landing. This exorbitant increase places an unjust burden on both airlines and passengers, driving up airfare prices and making travel to and within the CNMI significantly more expensive," Christian said.

One of the most concerning aspects of this unilateral decision by the CPA, Christian said, is the absence of cost controls on the organization's expenditures.

"The CPA lists any cost it decides it wants, whether the costs are required by the airline or just made by policy, marketing, or even legal settlements that may arise. It also allows the CPA to change their fees with just 30 days' notice to the airlines if they are unable to achieve the predicted number of flights to cover the CPA's elected expenses," he said.

Overall, Christian said the new method in which CPA is calculating its fees is concerning.

"This lack of transparency and accountability is deeply troubling, as it leaves airlines at the mercy of sudden fee adjustments without any reasonable justification. Star Marianas, among other airlines, has been vocal in its opposition to this fee structure since its imposition. Yet, the CPA's response has been to defend its right to impose fees rather than considering whether such fees are necessary or fair. It raises questions about whether the CPA has considered the consequences of imposing a fee structure without any cost-limiting controls. The unilateral decision by the Commonwealth Ports Authority to terminate the Airport Use Agreement without replacing it with adequate cost controls is a cause for great concern," he said.

Recently, CPA implemented a 90% increase in fees and a 79% increase in terminal rental rates.

CPA stated previously that these increases are a result of CPA's lack of funds and the absence of the China market.

IPI opposes Kan Pacific's request for writ of execution

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
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REPORTER

Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC has filed a motion in opposition of Kan Pacific Saipan Ltd.'s application for a writ of execution seeking the seizure of IPI properties.

IPI, through attorneys James Sirok and Michael Chen, have filed an opposition to Kan Pacific's application for a writ of execution seeking the seizure of IPI properties.

IPI's lawyers argue that because there were writs of execution issued earlier against IPI for the same assets sought by Kan Pacific, its application for writ of execution should be limited and modified to give senior judgments priority over Kan Pacific's.

"Plaintiff acknowledged that its judgment claims would be junior to the earlier and senior judgment liens, namely, the judgments in the USA Fanter and Joshua Gray cases. The same assets sought by plaintiff are also the collaterals of secured transactions where senior lien holders may have priority over the judgment claims made by plaintiff," the motion states.

In addition, IPI's lawyers said they have informed earlier lien holders about Kan Pacific's application for writ of execution and senior lien holders have expressed their intent to intervene.

"IPI has recently notified the senior lien holders of the writs issued as well as the pending application for writ by plaintiff in this action. Defendant IPI was informed by the senior lien holders that they intend to intervene to vindicate their rights," said IPI's lawyers.

Because of these arguments, IPI wants the court to order Kan Pacific to modify or limit the property belonging to the casino investor that they want seized.

Last month, Kan Pacific, through attorney Joseph J. Iacopino, filed an application for a writ of execution.

According to the application, Kan Pacific wants the U.S. District Court for the NMI to authorize the seizure of IPI's vehicles, liquor, and other available property belonging to the casino investor that can be sold to satisfy the over $600,000 judgment they were granted last year.

Iacopino added that the seizure and sale of IPI's property may stop once the judgment has been satisfied.

According to a previous article on the *Saipan Tribune*, Kan Pacific filed a complaint against IPI last Aug. 14 in federal court, alleging that IPI has continuously failed and refused to pay Kan Pacific even after the court already issued a default judgment against the casino investor back in 2022.

Kan Pacific sued IPI in 2021 for failing to fulfill its obligation under an agreement they had back in May 2016. Specifically, IPI was obligated to pay Kan Pacific annual payments, among other things, amounting to over $400,000 in June 2020, June 2021, and June 2022.

The court issued a default judgment against IPI amounting to over $600,000 but to date, IPI has yet to make payments.

Kan Pacific alleges IPI now owes another $200,000 for its June 2023 annual payment.

As relief, Kan Pacific wants the court to set the matter for a jury trial, order IPI to pay damages, the sum owed, the costs to file the suit, prejudgment interest, attorney's fees, and other relief deemed appropriate by the court.

The case arises from written agreement that was entered between Kan Pacific and IPI on or about May 9, 2016. The agreement essentially transferred all assets and operations from Kan Pacific to IPI and required Kan Pacific to encourage present employees to join IPI.

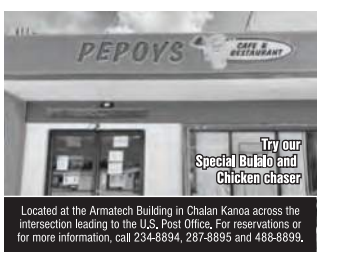
The agreement was meant to incentivize and compensate Kan Pacific for the closure of Kan Pacific's business operations prior to the termination of its lease agreement. As part of the consideration for entering into the agreement, IPI became contractually and legally bound and obligated to pay Kan Pacific the sum of $5 million, which was to be satisfied by making 25 annual payments to Kan Pacific in the amount of $200,000 on June 1 of each calendar year starting on June 1, 2017.

IPI made the first three annual payments that were due in June 2017, June 2018, and June 2019. However, Iacopino said IPI failed and refused to tender any portion of the amount that became due and owing on June 1, 2020.

This case was originally filed with the Superior Court but was dismissed back in July 2021.

ALL ABOUT STUDENTS FIRST PSS

Education interim commissioner of Donna M. Flores, extreme left, presides over her key management meeting last Friday afternoon. Held at the Public School System conference room on Capital Hill, Flores is joined by Education acting associate commissioner Shawn San Nicolas, elementary school principal representative Paulette Tomokane, middle school principal representative James Sablan, high school principal representative Vince Dela Cruz, acting Head Start director Jolene Sablan, senior directors Jackie Quitugua (Curriculum & Instruction), Dr. Rizalina Liwag (Accountability, Research & Evaluation), Dr. Yvonne R. Pangelinan (Student Support Services), Finance director Arlene Lizama, Human Resources officer Lucretia Deleon Guerrero, Family & Community Engagement Program manager Leila Yumul, Instructional Technology & Distance Education Program director Lorraine Catienza, Infrastructure Technology director Jesse Tenorio, acting Special Education director Nora Fujihira, legal counsel Michael Ernest, and Federal Programs officer Jacqueline Che.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Man sues construction company over unpaid overtime

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

A man is suing a construction company he previously worked for in federal court alleging that the company violated his rights under the U.S. Fair Labor Standards Act by not paying him for

Zhao Luzho has filed a lawsuit against his employer, Success International Corp., alleging violations of the Fair Labor Standards Act, and the Commonwealth Minimum Wage and Hour Act because he was allegedly not paid overtime.

"The plaintiff was employed, and actually performing work, in a job category that is not exempt from the provisions of the FLSA and/or the Minimum Wage and Hour Act," the lawsuit stated.

Zhao is represented by attorneys Robert T. Torres and Bruce Berline.

As relief, Zhao wants the court to order the defendants to pay him overtime compensation for all the hours he worked in excess of 40 hours in each work week.

In addition, Zhao is also asking the court to grant him liquidated damages and reasonable attorneys' fees and costs.

According to court documents, Zhao was hired at Success International back in June 2020 as a construction worker where he performed general construction duties.

Zhao said he was not provided a written employment but Success International agreed to pay him $10 per hour for his work.

The plaintiff said Success International paid him in cash for his construction services.

The plaintiff said he worked on several projects for Success International.

However, the plaintiff claims that from June 2020 to August 2021 he worked for Success International in excess of 8.5 hours per day, seven days per week.

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SISTER REMEDIOS BUILDING FACILITY FOR RENT

Available for rent is a two-storey building (semi-concrete), the MMB Sister Remedios Building in Chalan Kanoa #2. Building size is approximately 155 ft. x 42 ft. with stairs, common areas and restrooms. First and second floor (approximately 6,000 square feet each floor) and common exterior areas. Parking lot has 32 stalls including two disability access spaces. Additional area may be available for playground/activity area. Several used split a/c units are in-place from former tenants. Smal water-tank available. 5 separate CUC power meters. Building has network wiring in-place.

Suitable and acceptable uses include office space, church, (business) non-profit organization; school; daycare and early childhood/preschool facility. Not suitable for other purposes such as poker room; bar or other inappropriate businesses. Fenced and gated perimeter. Rear Annex building may be available, depending on proposal for rent/lease of the entire premises (approximately 7,000 square meters).

Minimum Terms: Minimum three (3) year lease (longer term may be available). Tenant is responsible for maintenance and repairs of the building/property. Asking $5,000.00 per month/ negotiable.

To schedule an appointment to meet and discuss, please contact: Law Office of Robert T. Torres, counsel for Mercederian Missionaries of Berriz (MMB) at rttlaw@gmail.com or Whatsapp/Text: 287-7859.

NOTICE: Inspections/ Walk-through by MMB-authorized appointment only.

ROUTE 36

From page 1

Chalan Kalabera Road.

He also thanked former governors Juan N. Babauta and Ralph DLG Torres, CNMI's Capital Improvement Project administrator Liz Balajadia, Department of Public Works Secretary Ray N. Yumul, DPW highway engineer Henry Bautista, DPW highway administrator Lorraine Villagomez and her team, the late U.S. Congressman Don Young, and Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (D-MP) for their contributions.

Route 36 is said to be Saipan's first inter-island connecting road. The project is funded by the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration. The contractor, RNV Construction, started the project on May 24, 2021. GHD Inc. is the construction manager.

Sharing the history of the project, Palacios said former governor Babauta, who was then the Washington representative, got about $12 million for the CNMI.

Young, who was then Alaska's lone congressional member and a known defender of Covenant, included a $12-million appropriation for the Talafofo road project on a list of projects for Alaska, but the funds were reportedly not drawn down.

The Covenant established the CNMI in political union with the United States of America.

Palacios said initially it was a congressional appropriation and it sat there since 2005 for the longest time because the CNMI didn't have the funding.

"But through the years and persistence, Federal Highway was able to put together a plan and with our Public Works, some secretaries who have now gone on other parts of their lives. We've had many governors. This project didn't start until two years ago I believe," Palacios said.

He recalled when they first went out to bid the project, it was $30 million and he knew they were in trouble as they didn't have that amount.

The governor said through persistence and discussions, when they created the Highway Task Force, in which DPW highway administrator Lorraine Villagomez was part of that along with many others, they took a look at it on how to approach in a way that they can pull it off.

Palacios said the two bridges are really the most critical part of this Route 36 because without it, people cannot go through this whole area.

He said DPW highway engineer Henry Bautista and CIP administrator Liz Balajadia were able to take a look at it and estimated the critical part—the two bridges.

Palacios said that's when they phased it out to three because they didn't have $20 million to $30 million.

"We cut it. We were able to move on and start this project," he pointed out.

Palacios said he believes now the federal highway is so proud of this project that they are going to up their game and give the CNMI the rest of the funding.

"This is a whole slew of leaders coming together to make this happen. It didn't matter who got it done, or who cut the ribbon or who ground broke. The fact that we're here today," Palacios said.

The governor disclosed that he asked DPW Secretary Ray N. Yumul to reach out and invite former governor Ralph DLG. Torres because he was the governor at the time when the project broke ground two years ago.

"Unfortunately, maybe he didn't make it today, but we did reach out and invited him to join us," said Palacios as some clapped hands.

Pointing to two beautiful beaches in the area, the governor said Route 36 Project will open up a lot of opportunities for land owners in this area, for recreation, and also tourism.

Palacios said he and Lt. Gov. Apatang are very proud that the agencies that worked together were able to pull this project off.

Route 36 Phase 2 project involves the construction of approximately 1.67 miles of all-weather roadway along Windward Road near the entrance to the Kingfisher Golf Links area in Talafofo going to Chalan Kalabera Road until the intersection of Chalan Matuis.

According to DPW, the improvements include travel lanes, shoulder/bike lane on each side, roadside and road drainage crossings, and permanent traffic markers and signs.

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

FROM PROAS TO EVS CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

We670 founder and host Mark Sonoda posted the highly anticipated official podcast episode "From PROAs to EVs: The Future of How We Move in the Marianas" last Monday night on YouTube, Spotify, and Apple Podcast. The episode featured Pacifica Insurance Underwriters, Inc. (PIUI) operations manager Shigeki Tenorio and will focus on the evolution of transportation in the Marianas. The episode was sponsored by PIUI's Pacifica GoGreen program, which recently installed the CNMI's first commercial EV station, in partnership with EVlution Energy. The EV station is located at the parking lot of Joeten Susupe. For more information about the EV station, log online at www.pacificains.com/gogreen. For more content focused on the Marianas, support We670 by donating to their Patreon on patreon.com/we670.

CANDIDATES

From page 1

as attorneys Mike Evangelista, Joey Patrick San Nicolas, Lilian A. Tenorio, and Lucy Maratita.

He said at the end of the day, he and Apatang will sit down and appoint the best suitable lawyers to serve as Superior Court judges.

The governor said the appointment of the judges is something that he takes seriously because of their important role in the community.

He did not indicate when they are going to make the nomination.

Associate Judge Wesley M. Bogdan will be retiring in December 2023, while Associate Judge Kenneth L. Govendo is retiring in June 2024.

Chief Justice Alexandro C. Castro last month requested Palacios for his timely consideration in nominating suitable candidates to fill these esteemed positions.

CATALYST

From page 1

challenge the resilience of the American spirit, and sow division and cause suffering in our community."

Instead, he said, the opposite happened, as "the tragic acts committed on Sept. 11 instead served as a catalyst to unite all Americans from Maine to the Marianas and to awaken and re-energize our patriotic spirit. We commemorate our fallen heroes not only for the ultimate sacrifices that they made but also to remind us to rededicate ourselves to the ideals and values and the beliefs that define us as a great nation and unite us as a people. We remember them today as we honor them... their memories and their legacy."

He added his appreciation to those brave individuals that continue to defend and fight for our liberties and freedom

In in remarks, Tan Holding CEO Jerry Tan shared that he felt privileged to carry on this tradition for eight years and thanked Tan Holdings Community Relations vice president Catherine Attao-Toves for her organizing the event each year.

"It's very important that we come together on Sept. 11 because of what happened 22 years ago but it's also important to remember the daily sacrifices that our community heroes are doing for us to keep us safe."

Department of Public Safety Commissioner Clement Bermudes, a former lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army, was the guest speaker at the event and during his remarks shared that he wanted to also recognize gold star families, families of the fallen, first responders past and present, veterans and their families.

"We reflect on the many lives lost that day, so we may remain humble and grateful for our nation's security, our liberties, and our unwavering strength. Next, let's respect the flag. The flag of freedom, because freedom is not free, for many have died for it." He added that mental health is very important and as a community to be aware and sensitive to the needs of those suffering trauma and invisible wounds from war.

"We must take the time out of our busy day to truly reflect and look around us and help those who need the help…Let's reach out to those among us who are silently grieving and suffering from the invisible wounds of trauma and war, because help is always available and we will be too…We will not forget the field of heroes. They are gone but not forgotten."

First responders from the Department of Fire Emergency and Medical Services and DPS and U.S. Navy Sea cadets joined community members and staff of Tan Siu Lin Foundation and Tan Holdings for the walk beginning at the Carolinian Utt to the AMP.

As soon as the leading CNMI honor guard approached the AMP, DEFEMS conducted a water salute. The commemorative march led the crowd through the hundreds of flags at the Flag Circle to where the ceremony was held.

The ceremony was concluded with dignitaries placing a commemorative wreath at the court of Honor just before DPS carried out a 21-gun salute.

First responder sirens also broke the silence just before Gus Kaipat, Gus Litulumar, and Patrick Romolor sang "God Bless the USA."

MARKET

From page 1

China entering the United States.

Saipan Tribune learned that HANMI has also reached out to the Office of the Governor, despite his recent position to pivot away from the China market altogether, on the matter.

In an interview with Palacios yesterday, he said he feels pressure from the community to reconnect with the China market.

However, Palacios said there are other factors in play like the interest of national security so the decision to reconnect with the market isn't fully his.

"I mean sure, do I feel a lot of pressure, believe it or not I feel that from the community that just wants this. I can assure you that this isn't just in my control, there's a national interest of security," he said.

"I am aware that the business community wants the China market back and if you've looked at my different speeches to the Senate and the House Congressional meeting in Guam, I put it out that we're always vulnerable despite the geopolitical position that we're in. We are building a $150-million divert airfield on Tinian and we're having meetings with the U.S. Department of Defense regarding the preparation of an environmental statement [as] there's going to be a military installation three miles from Saipan. We need to keep this in [mind]. We cannot continue to look at things for instant gratification," Palacios added.

Earlier this year, Palacios made public his intent to pivot the CNMI away from its reliance on the Chinese tourism market, in a nod to the increasing geopolitical tension between the United States and China.

In a letter to Adm. John Aquillino, commander of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, Palacios said his administration is committed to advancing U.S national interests in the Pacific region, which includes pivoting away from the CNMI's reliance on its Chinese tourism market.

However, the CNMI's tourism industry has suffered tremendously as a result.

According to a letter from HANMI to CPA, HANMI stated that at the rate hotels in the CNMI are operating right now, it will prove unsustainable unless the China market returns.

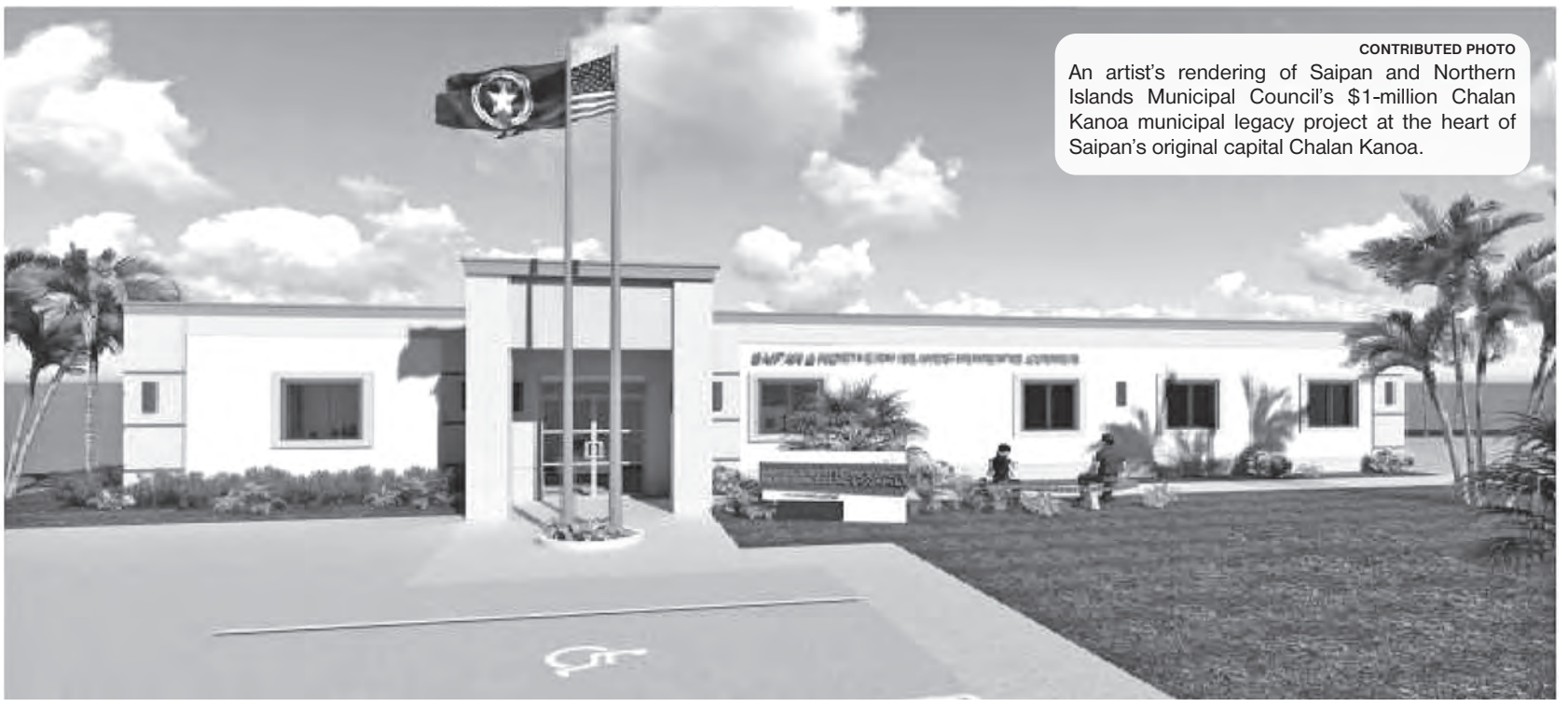
"Unlike provisions of ARPA that provided direct resources to the CNMI government to offset the substantial loss of revenue during the pandemic, our industry has sustained operations over two or more years of consistent losses without a similar access to direct funding. This is unsustainable, and it will become increasingly difficult for our hotel general managers to lobby their owners to keep the doors open. This is further exacerbated by no clear replacement of the China market. In this situation, funds are extremely tight, and improvements in our products take a back seat to keeping the lights on," said HANMI.

In its letter, HANMI added that it support's CPA's initiative to lobby for the exemption of the CNMI from the order that restricts the number of China-based flights coming into the United States and its territories.

"Before the pandemic, flights between the CNMI and China were approved separately from flights to the rest of the U.S. We endorse a request to USDOT to reinstate this and separate the CNMI from the current limitation of flights between the USA and China," said HANMI.

HANMI notes that an exemption is the only option that would give the CNMI's tourism industry a fighting chance.

$1M municipal council legacy project holds ground-breaking



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
An artist's rendering of Saipan and Northern Islands Municipal Council's $1-million Chalan Kanoa municipal legacy project at the heart of Saipan's original capital Chalan Kanoa.

Four past Saipan and Northern Islands Municipal Council administrations have come and gone since 2015 until the current 17th council leadership successfully jump-started the modernization of the Saipan local municipality.

Tomorrow, Sept. 14, beginning 2pm., local council chair Marian DLG. Tudela, vice chair Tonie M. Tudela, and secretary Carmen C. Pangelinan will host first lady Wella S. Palacios and other CNMI legislative and executive government officials, Saipan business representatives, and residents of Chalan Kanoa for the historic construction and ground-breaking in the rebuilding of the municipality legacy project in cooperation with project contractor R3B.

R3B topped three other contractors in ITB23-GOV-42300074 for the nearly $1-million Chalan Kanoa municipal legacy project at the heart of Saipan's original capital CK located at the intersection of Dr. Torres and Tun Segundo Road east of the U.S. Postal Service facility.

Construction will begin late this month or early October, once R3B receives from the public assistance office (PAO) the standard notice-to-proceed (NTP) document and the required regulatory permits are secured by the contractor authorized in the NTP.

The project time runs for 270 calendar days and completion is anticipated for late June to around late July next year.

The $97,000 reinforced two-storey architectural design was a seminal work product completed by the late A&E Richard Cody assisted by Jaime Pangelinan of the Guam-based Taniguchi Ruth Makio Associates (TRMA) firm.

The Saipan municipality legacy project features the main reinforced concrete ground floor structure with mechanical works, plumbing components, and electrical connections.

Although the percolation in the surrounding area prevents massive flooding, additional flood prevention is built seamlessly with the asphalt-based parking facility that funnels runoffs to an existing ponding basin.

The public parking features concrete safety curb, curb stop, pavement stripping, entry/exit sign, stop sign, and ADA signs. The parking facility is also connected with sidewalks to and from the ground floor main entrance to the building.

The parking will be secured with parking steel light poles and solar-operated flood lights equipped also with interior and exterior CCTVs.

The construction contract also adds a landscaping component on the entire municipal facility using local trees such as cassia glauca, tournefortia Argentea, and Singapore plumeria.

Palms will add a tropical flavour to the landscaping with cocos nucifera, and ptychosperna machartiurii.

The landscaping will feature shrubs including allamanda cathartica, bougainvilla spect, gardenia jasminoides, alpinia purpurta, heliconia humilis, and hibiscus rosa sinesis.

As ground covers, cynodon dactylon and ophiopogon japonicum will feature prominently in the landscaping.

The municipal legacy project is funded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Office of Insular Affairs, precinct II leadership infrastructure project, and third senatorial district project cost sharing match.

When completed next year, the Chalan Kanoa municipal facility would enable precinct two representatives to perform services at and be accessible to constituents at a Chalan Kanoa satellite office as part of the partnership networking with municipal leaders in the Saipan council and mayor within walking distance to the Chalan Kanoa Leadership Kiosku Courtyard and the United States Postal Services. ***(PR)***

URS CORPORATION
NOTICE OF WITHDRAWAL

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that URS Corporation (the "**Company**"), a foreign company, is applying for a Certificate of Withdrawal from the CNMI Registrar of Corporations.

Therefore, the Company surrenders the authority to transact business in the CNMI and revokes the authority of its registered agent, to accept services on its behalf and appoints the Registrar of Corporations of the CNMI as its agent for service of process in any proceeding based on a cause of action arising during the time it was authorized to transact business in the CNMI.

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality
Division of Coastal Resources Management
P.O. Box 501304, Saipan, MP 96950
Tel: (670) 664-8300; Fax: (670) 664-8315
www.dcrm.gov.mp

Eli D. Cabrera
Administrator

Richard V. Salas
Director, DCRM

MEETING OF THE CRM AGENCY OFFICIALS

Pursuant to Public Law 8-41, Section 11, Governor Arnold I. Palacios and Lt. Governor David M. Apatang through the Division of Coastal Resources Management (DCRM) hereby give notice that a CRM Agency Officials meeting will be held on Tuesday, September 19, 2023 at 2:30PM at the DCRM Learning Center, Suite 301, Gualo Rai Center II, on Chalan Pale Arnold Road in Lower Gualo Rai, Saipan.

Virtual public participation will continue and encouraged via video conferencing through Zoom link: hhtps://zoom.us/j (Meeting ID: 6706648315) or join via telephone by calling the DCRM office at (670) 664-8300 for connection assistance and most updated information as Zoom meeting access code may change.

AGENDA

I. PRELIMINARY MATTERS
   A. Call to Order
   B. Roll Call
   C. Adoption of Agenda
   D. Adoption of August 10, 2023 Meeting Minutes
II. PUBLIC COMMENTS
III. PERMIT APPLICATION REVIEW
   1) CRM Permit Application No. SMS-2023-085
      Project: CONSTRUCTION OF RETAINING WALLS & SHORELINE REVETMENT PROJECT
      Applicant: CNMI UNITED INVESTMENT CORPORATION, LTD. (Owner)
      The CNMI United Investment Corporation, Ltd. (CNMI UIC) is proposing to construct two retaining walls and sheet pile with rock riprap wall. The project is situated on leased private land identified as Lot No. 013 D 38 in Garapan, Saipan.
      a. Agencies' Discussions
      b. Agencies' Final Determination

IV. OTHER MATTERS
V. ADJOURNMENT

All interested persons are welcome to attend and submit written or oral testimony regarding the above agenda items. (Note: Pursuant to Public Law 8-41, Section 13(a) and Section 13(c), the Board may vote to meet in executive session).

/s/ RICHARD V. SALAS
Director, DCRM

BLACK MICRO CORPORATION

Saluda St., Lower Navy Hill
PMB 766, Box 10001 Saipan, MP 96950
Contact Person: Remi Sablan
(670) 322-4861 (office) • (670) 785-2598 (cell)
Email: remedios@blackguam.com

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Crisostomo Building, Suite 101/102
Contact No. (670) 322-4861 / (670) 785-2598

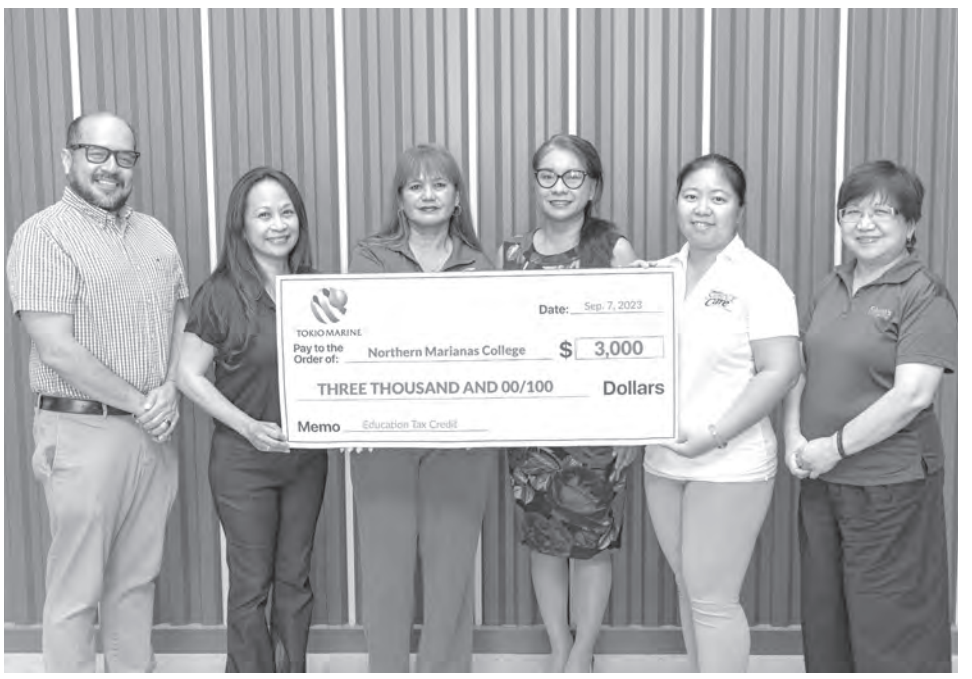
Employment application may be downloaded from our website at: www.blackconstructionguam.com
Opening begins: 9/11/2023 – 9/15/2023

Judiciary hosts annual Commonwealth Cultural Day Festivities

The CNMI Judiciary will be hosting its 3rd Annual Commonwealth Cultural Day festivities at the Guma' Hustisia on Friday, Oct. 6, 2023, from 10am to 2pm. The event will showcase a wide range of historical exhibits, handicrafts, and culinary delicacies from the Marianas, Micronesia, Polynesia, the United States, and Europe.

This year, the Judiciary Historical Society will sponsor the inaugural "Traditional and Customary Law Konbetsasion (Conversation)." This forum will highlight how the customs and traditions of Chamorro and Refaluwasch communities can play a vital role in resolving disputes related to critical issues such as adoption, land use, and fishing rights that often end up in court. The panelists will include community members who possess knowledge of indigenous customs and traditions in the Marianas.

The event is free and open to the public, with opportunities to pose questions to panelists. We encourage everyone to take part in the festivities and enjoy the exhibits and events. ***(PR)***


TOKIO MARINE
Date: Sep. 7, 2023
Pay to the Order of: Northern Marianas College $ 3,000
THREE THOUSAND AND 00/100 Dollars
Memo Education Tax Credit

ETC DONATION CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

As part of their longstanding support of higher education in the CNMI, Calvo's Insurance and Tokio Marine Pacific Ltd. recently donated $3,000 in educational tax contributions to the Northern Marianas College. In the photo from left, NMC president Dr. Galvin Deleon Guerrero and Calvo's Insurance representatives Lourdes Camacho, Carmen Pinaula, Marcia Calvo, Sandy Tse, and Cecille Cristobal. Interested individuals and companies who would like to donate to the college can contact the NMC Foundation at nmc@marianas.edu or call (670) 237-6780.

Pacific Vector Control and Outbreak Response Training set in Hilo

The Pacific Vector Network (PVN), Hawaii Department of Health, Hawaii Invasive Species Council, and the Pacific Southwest Center of Excellence in Vector-Borne Diseases (PacVec), in partnership with the Pacific Island Health Officers' Association (PIHOA), are pleased to announce that the 2023 Pacific Vector Control and Outbreak Response Training on Mosquitoes will be held from September 11 through 15, 2023 in Hilo, Hawaii.

More than 40 participants will be participating in the training from Hawaii and twenty Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs): American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Guam, Hawaii, Kiribati, Republic of Marshall Islands, Nauru, Republic of Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and Wallis and Futuna. The training is funded through training grants (PVN and PacVec) from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Participants will learn hands-on from subject matter experts how to identify mosquito habitats, place traps in different environmental conditions, and implement proper mosquito control methods. This training will also provide networking opportunities and peer-to-peer learning amongst our Pacific region vector management professionals, who will share strategies and best practices learned on their islands.

The training spans five days with combined lectures at the Grand Naniloa Hotel-Hilo and various field and laboratory activities. A wide range of topics will be presented, including public health entomology (emerging pathogens, epidemiology, and vector ecology); mosquito sampling strategies; mosquito identification; trapping and sorting; pinning and preservation of mosquito specimens; mosquito rearing and containment techniques; CDC bottle bioassay methodology; data entry; data analysis for decision-making; outbreak response; and safe application of pesticides.

The PVN is an initiative from the Pacific Public Health Surveillance Network (PPHSN) to strengthen vector-borne disease diagnostic, surveillance, and vector control capacities across the Pacific Islands by supporting the PPHSN members from the PICTs.

For any questions and media inquiries, please contact Ms. Billie Hiraishi, PIHOA Communications Officer, at +1 808-756-4118 or billieh@pihoa.org. ***(PR)***

ROTC battalions march for suicide awareness

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The Kagman Ayuyu ROTC Battalion took part in the "Light Up the Night" Suicide Prevention March last Sept. 5, 2023.

In a powerful show of community support, the Kagman Ayuyu ROTC Battalion along with ROTC battalions from Marianas High School and Saipan Southern High School participated in the "Light Up the Night" Suicide Prevention March last Sept. 5, 2023.

The event focused on raising awareness for suicide prevention with community members gathered at the Carolinian Utt in Garapan to perform a march.

The march began at sunset and the battalions, wearing distinctive shirts and carrying banners of support, marched alongside others, symbolizing hope for those affected by mental health issues. The event highlighted the importance of community support and awareness for suicide prevention. The event was a great success. ***(PR)***

DIVISION OF PROCUREMENT SERVICES
CNMI GOVERNMENT

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL
ADDENDUM NO. 1
RFP NO.: RFP23-GOV/OGM-42300087

SUBMISSION DATE: SEPTEMBER 19, 2023 TIME: 9:00 A.M.

"2023 ENERGIZING INSULAR COMMUNITIES 150 KW EXECUTIVE BUILDING SOLAR PV DESIGN-BUILT PROJECT"

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED ON THE MUNIS VENDOR SELF SERVICE PORTAL (https://selfservice.dof.gov.mp/vss/) OR AT THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT SERVICES, LOCATED AT BLDG NO. 12552, ANATAHAN DRIVE, CAPITOL HILL, SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

QUESTIONS REGARDING THIS RFP CAN BE MADE TO THE OFFICE OF GRANTS MANAGEMENT & STATE CLEARINGHOUSE BY SEPTEMBER 12, 2023 TO MR. EPIPHANIO E. CABRERA, JR. VIA EMAIL AT epi.cabrera@gov.mp

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

THE CNMI GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, OR PORTIONS THEREOF, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.

/S/ EPHIPHANIO E. CABRERA, JR
ADMINISTRATOR, OGM

/S/ GERALDINE T. CRUZ
ACTING DIRECTOR, PS

COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION
REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)
"ADDENDUM"
"CORRECTION ON THE LAST DATE TO SUBMIT QUESTIONS AND INQUIRIES"

RFP23-CHCC/CAS-019A

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF QUESTIONS AND INQUIRIES:
SEPTEMBER 18th, 2023
DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF RFP:
SEPTEMBER 29th, 2023 TIME: 10:00 AM (CHST)

"PROCUREMENT OF MOBILE OPEN MRI"

(Outright Purchase, Shipping, Delivery, Installation, Training and Commissioning for CHC Hospital/Radiology Department)

INTERESTED PARTIES CAN DOWNLOAD THIS REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL FROM THE CHCC WEBSITE [WWW.CHCC.HEALTH]. ONCE AT THE SITE, NAVIGATE TO **REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS** TAB ON THE LEFT NAVIGATION BAR. CLICK ON THE URL FOR THIS RFP. YOU WILL BE REQUIRED TO ENTER DATA TO ALLOW US TO TRACK ALL REQUESTS FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY.

THE CHCC RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY AND ALL PROPOSAL AND TO WAIVE ANY IMPERFECTIONS IN ANY PROPOSAL, IF TO DO SO SHALL BE IN THE INTEREST OF THE CHCC. ALL PROPOSALS SHALL BECOME THE EXCLUSIVE PROPERTY OF THE COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION.

/S/ ESTHER L. MUNA
CHCC CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

/S/ CORA P. ADA
DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT & SUPPLY

Island Summer Auto Fest legacy to live on

CHRYSTAL MARINO

The 2023 Island Summer Auto Fest's "Best of Show" winner a 2007 Toyota Rumion.

CHRYSTAL MARINO

Spectators watch one of NMTech's participants during the 2023 Burnout event last Saturday at the back of Joeten-Kiyu Public Library in Susupe.

By CHRYSTAL MARINO
chrystal_marino@saipantribune.com
CORRESPONDENT

Despite the heavy rain, hundreds of car enthusiasts flocked to the Marianas Business Plaza in Susupe last Saturday to witness the Island Summer Auto Fest car show and NMTech's 2023 Burnout competition at the back of the nearby Joeten-Kiyu Public Library. Both events coincided at the same time, but the car show carried on until 9pm.

In NMTech's 2023 Burnout competition, among the excitement of smoke and burning rubber were the cheers of support from car enthusiasts and family and friends of drivers as they attempted to make the most fumes in 30 seconds.

In the end, last year's winner, James Salalila, succesfuly defended his title as the burnout competition champion collected the 2023 trophy, $250 in cash, gift certificates from both Pacific Auto and Napa Auto Parts, and a slot to compete once again in next year's competition.

The Best of Show and first place in the VIP category went to none other than Mia Le'lani and Team Exotic and Exotic Minis with their impressive 2007 Toyota Rumion.

Team Exotic and Exotic Minis president Russel Hocog walked away from the competition with 15 overall awards after also being named the Best Club and Best of Show, while capturing the AK Award and Triple J Motors Award.

Winning first place in the 4x4 category was Peter Tenorio, Joey Pangelinan took first place in the truck category, Nathaniel Torres in the cruiser bike category, Juanito Sambile in the scooter/moped category, Jeffrey Riman in the four-door category, and Mark Caacbay in the two-door category.

In the sound off category, first place went to Jhune O. Echaure with his 2017 Hyundai Tucson (highest DB reading of 143.22)

The Island Summer Auto Fest car show would be the last one coordinated by current Island Summer Auto Fest president James Fleming.

He shared with *Saipan Tribune* that he feels very emotional about it, especially as he nears a decade of coordinating the event.

"I've been building cars for 26 years and it's time for me to pass on the torch to someone else."

Fleming said he now wants to focus on "meets" which is more of a gathering of car owners where everyone can check out each car without the competitive side, just a good get-together.

"I want to have this community where all the car enthusiasts come as one and always have something to do."

Although it's his swansong, he will still support the Island Summer Auto Fest, but he will strictly be doing meets from now on.

The car show continues to inspire young people to get involved in car mechanics as three young men from Kagman—Hiro, Damian, and Manuel—shared with *Saipan Tribune* that this was their first event and was very exciting for them.

"This is a new exciting environment for me because I'm not really into cars and this is my first car show event," said Damien.

Manuel, who is into cars, said "this is also my first event... I've been trying to get into cars and this event has really inspired me to get into cars now."

All three friends shared their excitement to go to another meet and encouraged their friends to come and see the next event as well.

CHRYSTAL MARINO

One of the flashy rides shown during the Island Summer Auto Fest last Saturday at the Marianas Business Plaza in Susupe.

CHRYSTAL MARINO

NMTech's Burnout auto techs prep a Participant's ride during the 2023 Burn Out event last Saturday at the back of Joeten-Kiyu Public Library in Susupe.

CHRYSTAL MARINO

Smoke was the name of the game during the 2023 Burnout event last Saturday at the back of Joeten-Kiyu Public Library in Susupe.

CHRYSTAL MARINO

A spectator livestreams NMTech's 2023 Burnout event last Saturday at the back of Joeten-Kiyu Public Library in Susupe.

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
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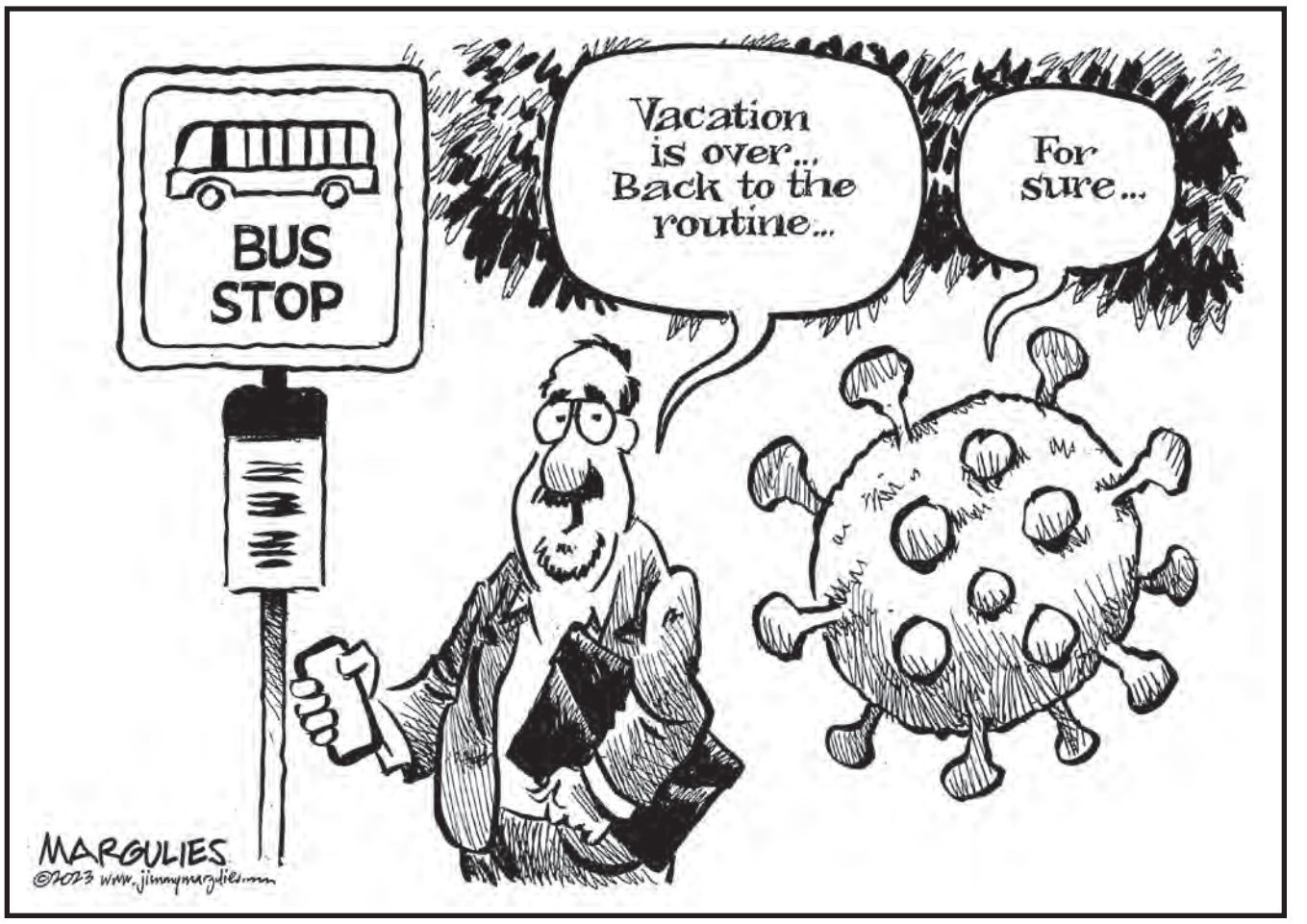

EDITORIAL

Congress, what could be more important than feeding mothers and children?

When the federal government falters, the nation's most vulnerable residents feel the effects hardest and fastest. That will be the case if Congress doesn't get its act together before the end of the month and approve funding for low-income families who receive federal food assistance.

After taking a monthlong summer vacation in August, Congress has precious few days left to pass funding bills for a dozen major federal agencies. The current fiscal year ends Sept. 30. If Congress misses the deadline, much of the federal government would shut down.

Hold on, one might interject. Didn't we just go through a federal government shutdown crisis? Didn't Republicans and President Joe Biden strike a deal to keep things running months ago?

Yes, but never underestimate Congress' most-radical members' ability to manufacture a new crisis. Last time the fight was over the debt ceiling. This time it's over spending bills. See, there's a difference. (We wish we could insert an eye rolling emoji here.)

The far-right members of the House Republican caucus are demanding steep cuts, and House Speaker Kevin McCarthy lacks the fortitude to stand up to them.

A bipartisan deal is on the table. The Senate Appropriations Committee, which Washington Sen. Patty Murray chairs, passed a full set of funding bills with bipartisan support. "We have provided a clear bipartisan road map to fund the government under extremely difficult constraints, proving Congress can work together and through its differences," Murray said.

McCarthy and the far-right holdouts aren't interested in working together.

Complicating matters—and here's where those low-income families come into it—the Biden White House has asked for supplemental spending on several items that some Republicans don't want to pay for, including money to bolster the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children, called WIC.

During the pandemic, Congress increased and expanded WIC benefits to reach more low-income mothers, pregnant women and children. It provides healthy food to families and some money they can spend on fruits and vegetables. It's a hugely successful program that helps young children get off to a healthy start in life. In an average month, 126,000 Washingtonians receive about $46 worth of food assistance.

Inflation the past couple of years has pushed food costs up, leaving those families vulnerable to food insecurity. Biden therefore has requested $1.4 billion to bolster WIC.

That money is tied up in the larger funding fight. If Congress doesn't act, many WIC benefits will run out in early October, and families will struggle to feed children nutritious meals.

Murray and her colleagues have a deal in place. It probably could get bipartisan support in the House after it passes the Senate. All it would take is for McCarthy to bring it up for a vote.

See CONGRESS on Page 19

New COVID variant shows value of booster shots

By LISA JARVIS
Bloomberg Opinion

Lisa Jarvis is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist covering biotech, health care and the pharmaceutical industry. Previously, she was executive editor of Chemical & Engineering News.

Preliminary data from three separate research teams suggest the latest anxiety-inducing COVID variant isn't quite the threat many had feared. BA.2.86—or what some armchair epidemiologists have dubbed "Pirola"—does seem capable of escaping some of our prior immunity, but we're not left defenseless.

Even better, data suggests the updated boosters, which are matched to a previous variant known as XBB, could still offer decent protection against the new edition.

That's hugely reassuring.

But it doesn't mean we can ignore this late-summer bump in COVID cases or skip the updated boosters. Instead, it should serve as a reminder that the virus isn't quite done with us yet. New variants will continue to appear, and our increasingly limited tracking of the virus could make us slow to react to whatever descendant comes next. (In case you're wondering what happened to Eris, the other recent variant, it's still circulating but the World Health Organization has said it's likely no worse than other variants we've seen.)

Infectious disease experts start to sweat when a new variant emerges with lots of changes in the spike protein, the now-familiar knobby feature on the surface of the virus that allows it to pierce our cells. So despite only a few cases of BA.2.86 identified in recent weeks, the 30 or so mutations in its spike protein grabbed scientists' attention.

Moreover, the variant suddenly showed up in wastewater samples in nearly a dozen countries, suggesting it had been quietly spreading at a time when the world is doing much less COVID monitoring.

To understand the potential problem posed by a new variant, researchers need to understand three things: whether it can spread more quickly, infect people more easily, or evade our existing immunity. When all three collide, there's a real danger of fresh waves of hospitalizations and deaths. And with little data to go on, some predicted BA.2.86 presented enough of a problem to cause another omicron-like event.

Thankfully, the first studies of the variant suggest things aren't quite that dire.

A team led by Dan Barouch, director of the Center for Virology and Vaccine Research at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, examined plasma samples from 66 people with a mix of exposures to vaccines and variants. Some had received the bivalent booster distributed last fall, while others hadn't, and each group included some people who had been recently infected by XBB.

The researchers made two key discoveries. The first is that everyone developed neutralizing antibodies against BA.2.86, and they were not any lower—and in fact were in most cases higher—than those generated against the already-circulating variants. In other words, the new variant does not seem to be as immune evasive as many had worried. "That was somewhat unexpected and welcome news," Barouch says.

And people who were infected with XBB generated substantially higher antibodies against all circulating variants, including BA.2.86. That bodes well for the boosters matched to XBB that are expected to arrive later this month. Moderna said this week that its updated booster induced an 8.7 fold increase in antibodies against the strain, and was similarly effective against other circulating variants.

Two other as-yet-unpublished analyses support a similar narrative: BA.2.86 does evade some of our prior immunity, but it's not as bad is some had feared, and the updated boosters could prop up that protection.

Though the result is a happy one, it's still a bit of a head-scratcher: If BA.2.86 has so many new mutations, shouldn't it be more immune evasive? Barouch's hypothesis is that BA.2.86 descended from BA.2, the omicron subvariant that became dominant in spring 2022 yet wasn't very good at evading immunity. While protection wobbled as it evolved, some amount of coverage remains.

To be sure, we're not out of the woods. One worry is that BA.2.86 could further mutate — or worse, combine with something XBB-like to take on scary new dimensions. And, of course, something entirely different could crop up. Scientists no longer have the funding or support to track the virus as closely as they did earlier in the pandemic, making it harder to detect something before it becomes a problem.

And hospitalizations have been ticking up from their historic lows for almost two months. We know many of the more serious cases are in older, more vulnerable people. The new data provide yet another motivation for people in those groups to get their updated booster as soon as they are available to ramp up their protection.

EDITORIAL POLICY

Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

I can learn how to socialize better from my dog

By KEVIN FRAZIER
The Fulcrum

Kevin Frazier will join the Crump College of Law at St. Thomas University as an Assistant Professor starting this Fall. He currently is a clerk on the Montana Supreme Court.

I took my mini Aussie doodle to the dog park to socialize. While he "connected" with other dogs through prolonged sniffs and ball chases, I did the exact opposite. I found an unoccupied corner, started a podcast, and made sure to avoid any unnecessary human interaction.

Upon reading this, my dad and others have surely rolled their eyes and chided, "Classic Millennial," before going back to scrolling through whatever app they're using—intentionally or not—to avoid human interaction.

I wish this was a "Millennial" phenomen. It's not. Gen Zers spend upwards of four hours a day on their phone. Before Boomers celebrate their superiority, they need to look in the mirror…something that might prove hard given that they, too, are distracted by screens. Boomers average an hour on social media per day and outpace everyone else when it comes to consuming daytime TV.

Collectively, we're all living through an "Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation," according to the U.S. Surgeon General.

And, it's our own dang fault.

We need to get off our armchairs, log out of our apps, and commit to being humans. It's a simple agenda that won't come about unless we get serious about being less lonely.

Step One: ban screens wherever your great-great-grandparent would have gone to see friends. Bar? No screens. Cafe? No screens. Dog park? You guessed it (yes, I know dog parks weren't big in the 1920s, but let's leave that aside for now). Some pioneering, Luddite institutions (oxymoron intended) have already instituted this rule. Check out the No Sweat Cafe in Helena, Montana for a case study. These sorts of institutions collect your phones upon entry, offer a box for you to place it in at your table, or plaster so many signs on the walls indicating their screen ban that you can't help but feel your great-great-grandparent admonishing you when you try to sneak a look at a pointless notification.

Step Two: wear a nametag. You're laughing. Good. It's silly, but easy. If you don't want to share your real name, fine. Pick any name and make it easier for you and for others to strike up a conversation.

Step Three: set up a "Screen Hour" and tell your friends about it. If your friends know that you only look at your phone from 7pm to 8pm each day, then, assuming they're nice, they will try to limit their texts to that hour. If they're really good friends then they might even follow your lead and adopt the same time for their "Screen Hour." In the remaining 23 hours of screen-free humanity, your odds of making a friend will skyrocket.

Step Four: talk about the weather—by which I mean, don't talk about politics. Some folks who, like me, want to revive our civic community, would disagree with me and urge people to talk more about elections, candidates, and issues. But, especially in the early stages of a friendship, a political comment that lands the wrong way has the potential to halt any progress along the path to "friend" status. You don't have to talk about the weather, but you should start with something "easy"—something you likely share in common and something that your great-great-grandparent wouldn't object to.

Step Five: use the F word. When you're looking for a "F"riend, don't be afraid to say so. It can be a little daunting to admit you're looking for more friends. As someone who has lived in three states in as many years, I've gotten over that fear through repetition. I sure wish I had told that guy at that dog park with the bulldog that I could use a friend—we could have walked our dogs to a coffee spot. That opportunity passed, but I've resolved not to miss the next one.

You may think each of these steps is a bunch of baloney, to quote my grandma. That's fine. My goal isn't for you to follow Frazier's Five Steps to Friendship. My goal is much more humble—just put your screen down when there's a human in front of you; friendships will follow. And those friendships may be the foundation for a lot of other necessary progress—specifically, stronger communities. But I'll leave my one-cent of wisdom on that topic for another day.

On the 30th anniversary of the Rabin-Arafat handshake, the ghost of Oslo still haunts Israel and the Palestinians

By TRUDY RUBIN
The Philadelphia Inquirer

Trudy Rubin is a columnist and editorial-board member for the The Philadelphia Inquirer.

Thirty years ago, on Sept. 13, 1993, I sat on a folding chair in the sunshine on the White House lawn, along with 3,000 other witnesses, watching President Bill Clinton nudge a reluctant Israeli prime minister and the ebullient chief of the Palestine Liberation Organization into shaking hands.

The occasion for the world-famous clinch between Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat capped the signing of the Oslo Accords. Secretly negotiated in Norway, they set out a declaration of principles that mapped a potential pathway to the end of conflict between Israeli Jews and the Palestinians, with self-determination for the latter.

People have been predicting Oslo's failure since that handshake.

I think the accords still had a chance until about the year 2000. Since then, with brief resuscitations, Oslo has mostly been on life support — with deep wounds inflicted by both sides.

The coup de grace may have been delivered by the current Israeli government with its open policy of de facto annexation of the West Bank into one apartheid-like Israeli state — in which Palestinians are given minimal rights and are pressed to emigrate.

Yet, as I look back on decades of covering this story — and on my three weeks in Israel and the West Bank in April — I can recall why Oslo might have succeeded, why its prospects died, and why its ghost won't disappear.

Lack of leadership

In the summer of 1995, a year after Arafat left his base in Tunisia and entered Gaza, as permitted by the Oslo Accords, I attended a meeting of so-called Fatah hawks in a large basement in Gaza City. I was the only journalist there, huddled in a corner, as my Palestinian interpreter, whom I knew well, whispered in my ear.

The Fatah hawks were Gazan members of Arafat's Fatah party, not the PLO men he brought back from abroad. Most had served time in Israeli prisons, spoke Hebrew, and had some grasp of Israeli society. They were angered by Arafat's refusal to crush Hamas and other Islamist groups that opposed Oslo. They believed this could undercut the agreement — and they spoke openly of wanting to end the conflict with two states, so they could start living normal lives.

I heard similar discussions at the time among West Bank and Gazan professional groups who were eager to trade an end to the Palestinian revolution for an end to occupation. Arafat never appeared to have made up his mind to do so, and never crushed the Islamists when it was still possible. (Instead, in 2007, Hamas drove Fatah forces out of Gaza, whose internal governance it still controls today.)

Then came Nov. 4, 1995. I was vacationing on Long Beach Island with my husband, Paul, when I turned on the radio and heard that Rabin had been assassinated by a messianic far-right Jewish terrorist. I remember looking at Paul and saying, "This may be the end of Oslo."

I still believe that, even though Rabin had serious doubts about a Palestinian state, he was the only Israeli leader tough and farsighted enough to convince Arafat to face reality and conclude a deal. A brief, brave effort in 2008 by center-right Prime Minister Ehud Olmert came too late.

Confidence laid low

Over the following years, I watched both Arafat and Israeli leaders take steps that destroyed public confidence in the Oslo process.

With Arafat, it was his tolerance of terrorist attacks on civilians inside pre-1967 Israel as a tactic of warfare.

In 2000, after the failure of Camp David II, after a violent intifada (uprising) broke out on the West Bank, I interviewed Marwan Barghouti, who is now in an Israeli prison under several life sentences, but was then Arafat's right-hand man. He told me the Palestinians would "talk and fight." He mistakenly believed terror attacks would get the Palestinians better terms at the table.

But the 2000 Israeli presidential election brought the right-wing Likud candidate Ariel Sharon to power. Israeli voters in the liberal German Colony neighborhood whispered to me, as if afraid to let their friends hear, that they would vote for the right this one time because Sharon would stop the terror attacks. That was the start of a long-rightward trend (with brief exceptions) in Israeli presidential politics, during which Benjamin Netanyahu has served as prime minister for 15 years.

In other words, the "talk and fight" strategy failed.

However, during all those decades since the Oslo signing, I also watched the disastrous Israeli expansion of Jewish settlements on the West Bank. On annual tours of the area, I saw the endless construction of settler apartment buildings marching across hilltops and settlement roads dissecting the entire West Bank.

Perhaps the greatest error of Oslo was to permit Israeli settlement growth to continue unabated during negotiations (Israel insisted on it, and the Palestinians still believed they would have their own state soon.)

The number of Jewish settlers soared from 116,000 in 1995 to 465,000 in 2022. Settlement infrastructure gradually divided the West Bank into disconnected cantons, which became open Israeli policy.

Moreover, settler violence, uprooting Palestinian olive groves, and seizing Palestinian land and water, has grown over the years. On my recent trip to the West Bank, I saw the burned-out buildings in the town of Hawara, the work of violent settler gangs that are being egged on by people in Netanyahu's cabinet. Settler violence has metastasized since April unchecked by the Israeli military, as Palestinian terrorist attacks on settlers have also increased.

Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, whom Netanyahu has made the cabinet's overlord of the West Bank, wants to double the number of settlers there to 1 million and de facto annex the West Bank even if there is no legal declaration.

Given the lack of leadership on both sides—as messianic radicals control Netanyahu and the 87-year-old, almost powerless Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas grows more incoherent—Smotrich may succeed.

Here is where the ghost of Oslo takes its revenge.

Thirty years ago, Yitzhak Rabin agreed to the Oslo Accords because he foresaw that Arabs would eventually outnumber Jews in a one-state Greater Israel. That would mean either the end of a Jewish homeland or Israelis ruling over Palestinians in an apartheid-style state.

Rabin's nightmare apartheid scenario has arrived under the Netanyahu government.

No U.S.-brokered deal between Israel and Saudi Arabia — and I seriously doubt one will materialize, despite the current hoopla — will change that reality.

The demise of Oslo leaves Israel facing the death of its democracy (even if mass Israeli protests stop Netanyahu from destroying Israel's Supreme Court).

That is the reality I observed firsthand in April. It overshadows my memories of that hopeful handshake on the White House lawn.

CONGRESS

From page 20

That would infuriate the most conservative Republicans and potentially put his speakership at risk. He must ask himself what's more important, holding onto power in an untenable situation or feeding mothers and children?

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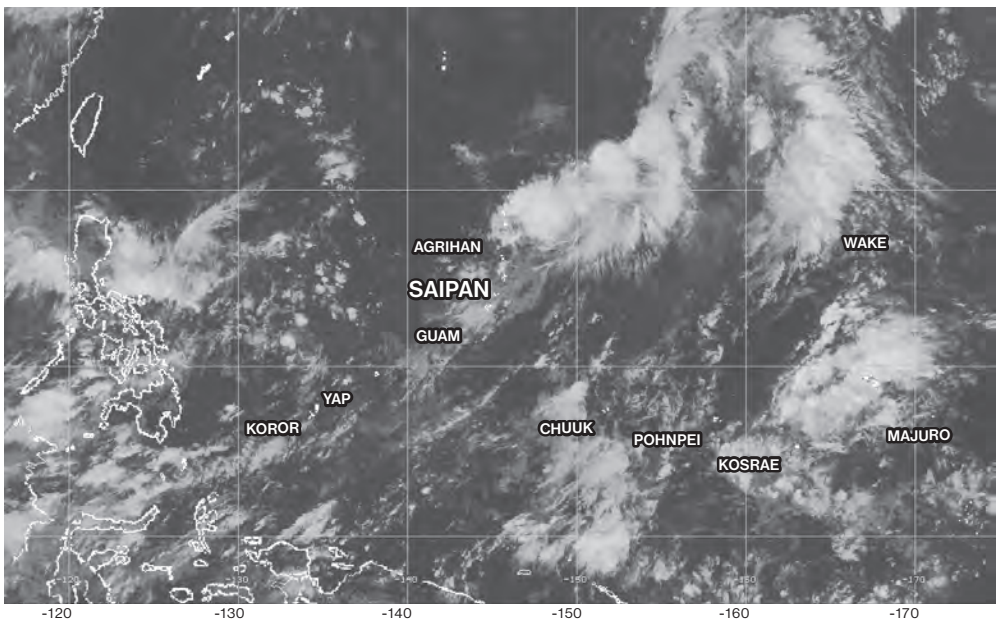
The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
Mostly sunny	Isolated showers. Mostly sunny	Mostly sunny	Partly sunny	A chance of showers. Partly sunny
86° 79°	87° 79°	87° 79°	88° 79°	88° 79°

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 8:02 AM, TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2023

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

The scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms that developed within the coastal waters of Guam this morning have dissipated and created an uniformed area of rain across Guam and its coastal waters. Showers remain isolated across the Rota, Tinian, and Saipan. Satellite imagery also shows some cooling cloud top within Saipan's water so left isolated thunderstorms in the coastal waters forecast for the CNMI.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: https://www.weather.gov/gum/

MICRONESIA		▲ ▼ °F
Guam and Rota	Partly Cloudy	85° / 77°
Palau	Partly Cloudy	85° / 80°
Yap	Partly Cloudy	84° / 80°
Chuuk	Thunderstorm	86° / 79°
Pohnpei	Thunderstorm	87° / 76°
Kosrae	Thunderstorm	87° / 76°
Majuro	Thunderstorm	86° / 81°

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:05 AM	6:20 PM
Thursday	6:05 AM	6:19 PM
Friday	6:05 AM	6:19 PM
Saturday	6:05 AM	6:18 PM
Sunday	6:05 AM	6:17 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	4:25 AM	5:23 PM	-
Thursday	5:13 AM	5:58 PM	-
Friday	6:00 AM	6:32 PM	-
Saturday	6:46 AM	7:05 PM	-
Sunday	7:33 AM	7:39 PM	-

AROUND THE GLOBE		▲ ▼ °F
Auckland	Mostly Sunny	61° / 52°
Beijing	Mostly Sunny	88° / 68°
Hong Kong	Thunderstorm	86° / 79°
Honolulu	Rain	83° / 76°
London	Showers	59° / 46°
Los Angeles	Partly Cloudy	80° / 65°
Manila	Thunderstorm	88° / 79°
Melbourne	Mostly Sunny	64° / 48°
Miami	Partly Cloudy	89° / 80°
New York	Showers	81° / 73°
Osaka	Partly Cloudy	84° / 72°
Paris	Sunny	72° / 52°
Busan	Partly Cloudy	77° / 72°
Rome	Mostly Sunny	90° / 66°
Salem	Thunderstorm	88° / 72°
San Francisco	Partly Cloudy	60° / 52°
Seoul	Mostly Sunny	84° / 64°
Tokyo	Rain	73° / 66°
Washington, DC	Thunderstorm	85° / 74°

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		FEET
12:58 AM	Low Tide	1.05
6:02 AM	High Tide	1.74
1:01 PM	Low Tide	0.15
7:42 PM	High Tide	1.80

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF SEPTEMBER 1, 2023

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA117	9:50AM	10:30AM	Daily
UA156	7:10PM	7:55PM	1 up to Sep 4

SAIPAN- NARITA (NRT)

UA824	7:25AM	9:55AM	1, 3, 5

GUAM-MANILA (MNL)

PR 111	5:55AM	7:55AM	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
PR 111	7:05AM	9:05AM	7
UA193	6:55PM	10:55PM	2, 5 via Palau
UA183	7:15PM	9:10PM	Daily up to Sep 4
UA183	7:20PM	9:10PM	Daily from Sep 5

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

OZ626/703	4:20AM	10:35PM	1, 4, 5, 7
7C3403/2305	4:45AM	10:20PM	Daily
UA117/183	9:50AM	9:10PM	Daily via Guam
UA117/193	9:50AM	10:55PM	2, 5 via Guam, Palau

SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)

TW308	3:15AM	7:00AM	Daily
OZ626	4:20AM	7:55AM	1, 4, 5, 7
7C3403	4:45AM	8:35AM	Daily
7C3405	4:10PM	7:45PM	Daily

SAIPAN-BUSAN (PUS)

7C3451	3:20AM	6:30AM	1, 4, 5, 7

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA174	8:00AM	8:50AM	Daily
UA112	5:15PM	6:05PM	1 up to Sep 4

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

UA825	9:25PM	1:50AM+1	2, 4, 7

MANILA (MNL)-GUAM

UA184	10:25PM	4:25AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7
UA192	10:25PM	6:10AM+1	2, 5 via Palau
PR110	10:30PM	4:25AM+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7
PR110	11:40PM	5:35AM+1	6
UA184	11:50PM	5:50AM+1	2, 5

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

OZ702/625	12:05PM	2:55AM+1	3, 4, 6, 7
UA184/174	10:25PM	8:50AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6,7 via Guam
UA192/174	10:25PM	8:50AM+1	2, 5 via Palau, Guam
7C2306/3406	11:10PM	3:10PM+1	Daily
UA184/174	11:50PM	8:50AM+1	2, 5 via Guam

INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN

7C3406	9:30AM	3:10PM	Daily
TW307	8:30PM	2:15AM+1	Daily
OZ625	9:25PM	2:55AM+1	3, 4, 6, 7
7C3404	10:10PM	3:40AM+1	Daily

BUSAN (PUS)-SAIPAN

7C3452	9:35PM	2:20AM+1	3, 4, 6, 7

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JUNE 1, 2022

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1301	8:30	9:00	Daily
1302	11:00	11:30	Mon/Wed/Fri
1302	12:00	12:30	Tues/Thurs/Sat/Sun
1303	15:30	16:00	Daily

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3101	9:30	10:00	Daily
3102	13:00	13:30	Tues/Thurs/Sat/Sun
3102	14:00	14:30	Mon/Wed/Fri
3103	16:30	17:00	Daily

ROTA TO GUAM

LIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3401	12:00	12:30	Mon/Wed/Fri

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
4301	13:00	13:30	Mon/Wed/Fri

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1202	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	10:00	10:15	Daily
1208	14:00	14:15	Daily
1209	15:00	15:15	Daily
1210	16:00	16:15	Daily
1211	17:00	17:15	Daily

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
2102	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	10:30	10:45	Daily
2108	14:30	14:45	Daily
2109	15:30	15:45	Daily
2110	16:30	16:45	Daily
2111	17:30	17:45	Daily

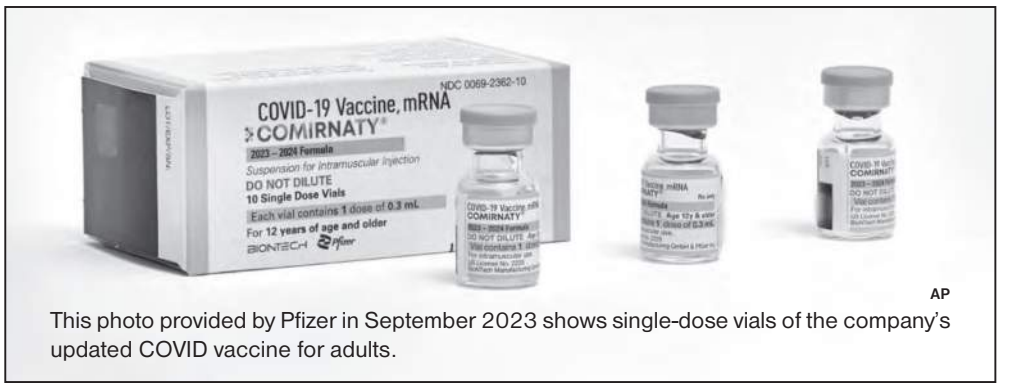
Business

US approves updated COVID vaccines to rev up protection this fall

WASHINGTON (AP)—The U.S. approved updated COVID-19 vaccines Monday, hoping to rev up protection against the latest coronavirus strains and blunt any surge this fall and winter.

The Food and Drug Administration decision opens the newest shots from Moderna and Pfizer and its partner BioNTech to most Americans even if they've never had a coronavirus vaccination. It's part of a shift to treat fall updates of the COVID-19 vaccine much like getting a yearly flu shot.

There's still another step: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention must sign off. A CDC advisory panel is set to issue recommendations Tuesday on who most needs the updated shots. Vaccinations could begin later this week, and both the COVID-19 and flu shot can be given at the same visit.



AP

This photo provided by Pfizer in September 2023 shows single-dose vials of the company's updated COVID vaccine for adults.

A third vaccine maker, Novavax, said its updated shot is still being reviewed by the FDA.

COVID-19 hospitalizations have been rising since late summer although —- thanks to lasting immunity from prior vaccinations and infections —- not nearly as much as this time last year.

But protection wanes over time and the coronavirus continually churns out new variants that can dodge prior immunity. It's been a year since the last time the vaccines were tweaked, and only about 20% of adults ever received that earlier update.

"Vaccination remains critical to public health and continued protection against serious consequences of COVID-19, including hospitalization and death," FDA vaccine chief Dr. Peter Marks said in a statement. "We very much encourage those who are eligible to consider getting vaccinated."

Just like earlier vaccinations, the fall round is cleared for adults and children as young as age 6 months. FDA said starting at age 5, most people can get a single dose even if they've never had a prior COVID-19 shot. Younger children might need additional doses depending on their history of COVID-19 infections and vaccinations.

The FDA pointedly isn't calling this latest round a "booster" but instead a vaccine updated to better match the currently circulating virus. The new recipe targets an omicron variant named XBB.1.5—replacing outdated combination vaccines that mixed protection against the original coronavirus strain and an older version of omicron.

And while even the XBB.1.5 variant is no longer dominant, FDA determined that it's close enough to coronavirus strains causing most COVID-19 illnesses today to offer good cross-protection. Like earlier versions, they're expected to be most protective against COVID-19's worst consequences rather than mild infection.

But while the FDA's decision allows for wide use of the updated shots, the CDC will decide how strongly different groups are urged to get them.

Federal officials have said the shots still will be free to most Americans through private insurance or Medicare. But for the uninsured or underinsured, the CDC is working with health departments, clinics and certain pharmacies to temporarily provide free shots.

Google's search engine dominance center of biggest US antitrust trial in decades

By MICHAEL LIEDTKE
AP TECHNOLOGY WRITER

The U.S. government is taking aim at what has been an indomitable empire: Google's ubiquitous search engine that has become the internet's main gateway.

The legal attack will swing into full force Tuesday in a Washington D.C. federal courtroom that will serve as the battleground for the biggest U.S. antitrust trial since regulators went after Microsoft and its dominance of personal computer software a quarter century ago.

The 10-week trial before U.S. District Judge Amit Mehta is expected to include potentially revelatory testimony from top executives at Google and its corporate parent Alphabet, as well as other powerful technology companies. Alphabet CEO Sundar Pichai, who succeeded Google co-founder Larry Page in 2019, will be among the most prominent witnesses likely to testify. Court documents also indicate one of Apple's highest-ranking executives, Eddy Cue, might be called to the stand.

The case against Google mirrors the one brought against Microsoft in many ways, including the existential threat it poses to a renowned tech giant whose products are relied on by billions of people.

The trial is scheduled to continue into late November before its first phase wraps, after which another round of court filings and arguments are expected. Mehta isn't expected to issue a ruling until early next year. If he decides Google has been breaking the law, it will trigger another trial to determine what measures should be taken to rein in the Mountain View, California, company.

Although Google products such as the Chrome web browser, Gmail, YouTube and online maps all are hugely popular, none have become as indispensable—or as valuable—as the internet search engine invented by Page and a fellow Stanford University graduate student, Sergey Brin, during the late 1990s.

The trial is beginning just a couple weeks after the 25th anniversary of the first investment in the company—a $100,000 check written by Sun Microsystems co-founder Andy Bechtolsheim that enabled Page and Brin to set up shop in a Silicon Valley garage.

Today, Google's corporate parent, Alphabet Inc., is worth $1.7 trillion and employs 182,000 people, with most of the money coming from $224 billion in annual ad sales flowing through a network of digital services anchored by a search engine that fields billions of queries a day.

Google could be hobbled if the antitrust trial culminates in concessions that undercut its power. One possibility is that the company could be forced to stop paying Apple and other companies to make Google the default search engine on smartphones and computers.

Or the legal battle could cause Google to lose focus. That's what happened to Microsoft after its antitrust showdown with the Justice Department: Distracted, the software giant struggled to adapt to the impact of internet search and smartphones. Google capitalized on that distraction to leap from its startup roots into an imposing powerhouse.

Nearly three years after filing its antitrust lawsuit during the Trump administration, lawyers from the U.S. Justice Department will try to prove Google has been abusing the power of its search engine to stifle competition in ways that discouraged innovation. Critics say the quality of search results has deteriorated, too, as Google used its engine to sell ads and promote its own products, like Google restaurant reviews instead of those offered by Yelp.

Dozens of state attorneys general, led by Colorado, have waded into the battle and will have a chance to prove Google turned into an illegal monopoly that's harming consumers.

The crux of the Justice Department's argument will boil down to its contention that Google's search engine has become like digital air almost everyone breathes, and that it needs to be cleaned up because the company's tactics have polluted the atmosphere.

Google's vast legal team is expected to counter that the company has never stopped improving its search engine, executing its original mission to organize the world's information and make it universally accessible to anyone with an internet connection. From Google's perspective, the perpetual improvements explain why most people almost reflexively gravitate to its search engine, a habit that long ago made "Googling" synonymous with looking things up.

Despite commanding about 90% of the internet search market, Google argues it faces a wide range of competition ranging from other search engines such as Microsoft's Bing and DuckDuckGo to websites such as Amazon and Yelp, where people research questions about what product to buy or where to eat.

The Justice Department contends Google's claim that it dominates the market by supplying the best search engine is a canard. They allege Google protects its franchise through a form of payola, shelling out billions of dollars annually to be the default search engine on the iPhone and web browser such as Apple's Safari and Mozilla's Firefox.

Regulators also allege Google has illegally rigged the market in its favor by requiring its search engine to be bundled with its Android software for smartphones if the device manufacturers want full access to the Android app store.

By locking in Google's search engine as the default choice in so many places, the Justice Department contends the company has made it more difficult for people to find the best results as quickly as possible.

Regulators allege the company's deals ensure Google's automatic access to billions of queries that provide data for its search engine, while boxing out Bing and DuckDuckGo from getting information that could help them improve their results.

The tactics have created a toxic situation allowing Google to cram more ads at the top of its search results, increasing its profits and Alphabet's stock price, according to the Justice Department. That practice requires consumers to dig ever deeper to answer their questions, something that regulators believe could be avoided if rival services were able to collect as much information as Google does through its lock-in agreements.

Google insists that consumers could easily switch their default settings to another search engine.

The company also argues that it does face competition from evolving technology: Microsoft, for example, is baking artificial intelligence from its business partner Open AI into its Bing search engine. That move in early February prodded Google to start equipping its search engine with AI-fueled results too—a sign that the company says shows competition continues to thrive.

California fast food, health care workers poised to win major salary increases

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP)—Nearly 1 million California workers are poised to win major salary increases after labor unions flexed their collective muscle in the state's Democratic-led Legislature on Monday following a summer of high-profile strikes in the entertainment and hospitality industries.

Most of the state's 500,000 fast food workers would be paid at least $20 per hour next year under a new bill aimed at ending a standoff between the industry and labor unions over wages and working conditions. About 455,000 health care workers—not doctors and nurses, but the people who do everything else at hospitals, dialysis clinics and other facilities—will see their salaries rise to at least $25 per hour over the next 10 years in a separate bill.

Both proposals must first pass the state Legislature and be signed into law by Gov. Gavin Newsom. But the proposals have the blessing of both labor unions and industry groups, clearing the path for passage this week before lawmakers adjourn for the year.

An added bonus for voters: The November 2024 ballot will be a little less crowded. The fast food industry has agreed to withdraw its referendum on a fast food law that Newsom signed last year.

The bills, both introduced Monday, are just some of the impressive run of results for labor unions in the state Legislature this year. Also on Monday, the state Assembly voted to advance a proposal to give striking workers unemployment benefits—a policy change that could eventually benefit Hollywood actors and writers and Los Angeles-area hotel workers who have been on strike for much of this year.

"I think fast food cooks and cashiers have fundamentally changed the politics of wages in this country and have reshaped what working people believe is possible when they join together and take on corporate power and systemic racism," said Mary Kay Henry, international president of the Service Employees International Union.

California's minimum wage is already among the highest in the country at $15.50 per hour. The fast food bill would increase that minimum wage to $20 per hour for workers at restaurants in California that have at least 60 locations nationwide—with an exception for restaurants that make and sell their own bread, like Panera Bread.

The bill will affect about 500,000 fast food workers in California, according to the Service Employees International Union, which has been working to unionize fast food workers in the state. They include Ingrid Vilorio, who works at a Jack In The Box in the San Francisco Bay Area. She said the raise will help her family, who until recently was sharing a house with two other families to afford rent.

Nation

US sets record for billion-dollar weather disasters in a year

By SETH BORENSTEIN
AP SCIENCE WRITER

AP
Ryan Orosco, of Brentwood, carries his son Johnny, 7, on his back while his wife Amanda Orosco waits at the front porch to be rescued from their flooded home on Bixler Road in Brentwood, Calif., Jan. 16, 2023.

The deadly firestorm in Hawaii and Hurricane Idalia's watery storm surge helped push the United States to a record for the number of weather disasters that cost $1 billion or more. And there's still four months to go on what's looking more like a calendar of calamities.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration announced Monday that there have been 23 weather extreme events in America that cost at least $1 billion this year through August, eclipsing the year-long record total of 22 set in 2020. So far this year's disasters have cost more than $57.6 billion and claimed at least 253 lives.

And NOAA's count doesn't yet include Tropical Storm Hilary's damages in hitting California and a deep drought that has struck the South and Midwest because those costs are still to be totaled, said Adam Smith, the NOAA applied climatologist and economist who tracks the billion-dollar disasters.

"We're seeing the fingerprints of climate change all over our nation," Smith said in an interview Monday. "I would not expect things to slow down anytime soon."

NOAA has been tracking billion-dollar weather disasters in the United States since 1980 and adjusts damage costs for inflation. What's happening reflects a rise in the number of disasters and more areas being built in risk-prone locations, Smith said.

"Exposure plus vulnerability plus climate change is supercharging more of these into billion-dollar disasters," Smith said.

NOAA added eight new billion-dollar disasters to the list since its last update a month ago. In addition to Idalia and the Hawaiian firestorm that killed at least 115 people, NOAA newly listed an Aug. 11 Minnesota hailstorm; severe storms in the Northeast in early August; severe storms in Nebraska, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana and Wisconsin in late July; mid-July hail and severe storms in Michigan, Wisconsin, Ohio, Tennessee and Georgia; deadly flooding in the Northeast and Pennsylvania in the second week of July; and a late June outbreak of severe storms in Missouri, Illinois and Indiana.

"This year a lot of the action has been across the center states, north central, south and southeastern states," Smith said.

Experts say the United States has to do more to adapt to increased disasters because they will only get worse.

"The climate has already changed and neither the built environment nor the response systems are keeping up with the change," said former Federal Emergency Management Agency director Craig Fugate, who wasn't part of the NOAA report.

The increase in weather disasters is consistent with what climate scientists have long been saying, along with a possible boost from a natural El Nino, University of Arizona climate scientist Katharine Jacobs said.

"Adding more energy to the atmosphere and the oceans will increase intensity and frequency of extreme events," said Jacobs, who was not part of the NOAA report. "Many of this year's events are very unusual and in some cases unprecedented."

Smith said he thought the 2020 record would last for a long time because the 20 billion-dollar disasters that year smashed the old record of 16.

It didn't, and now he no longer believes new records will last long.

Stanford University climate scientist Chris Field called the trend in billion-dollar disasters "very troubling."

"But there are things we can do to reverse the trend," Field said. "If we want to reduce the damages from severe weather, we need to accelerate progress on both stopping climate change and building resilience."

Trump lawyers seek recusal of judge in DC presiding over federal election subversion case

WASHINGTON (AP)—Lawyers for Donald Trump on Monday asked the federal judge presiding over his election subversion case in Washington to recuse herself, saying her past public statements about the former president and his connection to the Jan. 6, 2021, riot at the U.S. Capitol call into question whether she can be fair.

The recusal motion from Trump's lawyers takes aim at U.S. District Judge Tanya Chutkan, a former assistant public defender who was nominated to the bench by President Barack Obama and has stood out as one of the toughest punishers of Jan. 6 defendants. The request is a long shot given the high threshold for recusal and because the decision on whether to recuse belongs to Chutkan, who is unlikely to see cause to step aside from the case.

Even so, the request that she give up the high-stakes trial marks the latest flashpoint in already delicate relations between the defense team and the judge, who has repeatedly cautioned against inflammatory public comments from Trump but has nonetheless been lambasted on social media by him. Special counsel Jack Smith's team signaled its own concern about his comments, writing last week that Trump's daily statements — he has derided her as "highly partisan" — could taint a potential jury pool.

Chutkan ordered Smith's team to file any opposition to Trump's recusal bid by Thursday.

Chutkan last month scheduled the trial for March 4, 2024, over the vigorous objections of defense lawyers who said that would not give them enough time to prepare. The case in Washington, charging Trump in a four-count indictment with plotting to overturn the results of the 2020 election, is one of four criminal cases confronting the former president as he seeks reelection to the White House.

In asking Chutkan to step aside, the Trump legal team is relying on a familiar playbook. He tried unsuccessfully to get the judge removed from the hush-money case against him in New York state court, with his lawyers claiming that Judge Juan Manuel Merchan is biased because he's given cash to Democrats and his daughter is a party consultant.

But the judge last month rejected Trump's demand that he step aside, saying he is certain of his "ability to be fair and impartial."

Federal judges are supposed to step aside in cases where their "impartiality might reasonably be questioned." Other bases for recusal include a personal bias against one of the parties. Trump's lawyers say Chutkan's comments in cases against Jan. 6 rioters show she has "already formed an opinion about President Trump's guilt" and many of the allegations that underpin the indictment against him.

"Although Judge Chutkan may genuinely intend to give President Trump a fair trial — and may believe that she can do so — her public statements unavoidably taint these proceedings, regardless of outcome," the defense team wrote. "The public will reasonably and understandably question whether Judge Chutkan arrived at all of her decisions in this matter impartially, or in fulfillment of her prior negative statements regarding President Trump."

Chutkan has often handed down prison sentences in Jan. 6 cases that are harsher than Justice Department prosecutors recommended. The judge also previously ruled against Trump in a separate Jan. 6 case, refusing his request to block the release of documents to the U.S. House's Jan. 6 committee by asserting executive privilege.

Trump's lawyers quoted from remarks Chutkan made in a 2022 sentencing hearing for Christine Priola, a Jan. 6 defendant from Ohio who pleaded guilty to obstructing Congress' certification of Joe Biden's electoral victory — one of the same charges Trump is facing.

"The people who mobbed that Capitol were there in fealty, in loyalty, to one man — not to the Constitution, of which most of the people who come before me seem woefully ignorant; not to the ideals of this country, and not to the principles of democracy," Chutkan said. "It's a blind loyalty to one person who, by the way, remains free to this day."

The defense also cited Chutkan's comments from the sentencing of a rioter from Florida who attacked police officers working to hold back the crowd. During the December 2021 hearing for Robert Palmer, who was sentenced to more than five years in prison, Chutkan said the defendant "made a very good point" that the "people who exhorted" and encouraged him "to go and take action and to fight" had not been charged. Chutkan added that she doesn't "make charging decisions" and has no "influence on that."

"I have my opinions, but they are not relevant," Chutkan said.

Trump's attorneys said that comment suggests she believed at the time that Trump should be charged.

Cash bail disproportionately impacts communities of color

CHICAGO (AP)—It took four and a half months for Shannon Ross' life to unravel.

Ross, who describes himself as Indigenous and a person of color, was arrested in Chicago in October 2019 on weapons charges and ultimately found not guilty. But that came only after he spent months in jail awaiting trial, lost his home, car, job and countless moments with his children.

Ross couldn't afford the $75,000 bond set during a hearing that he recalls lasted only a few minutes.

"I had to lose everything to prove that I wasn't guilty," he told The Associated Press. "It messes with you mentally, psychologically. It messes up relationships; it messes up the time you put in to build your life up."

But Illinois is about to overhaul the system that upended Ross' life. Illinois' Pretrial Fairness Act, which abolishes cash bail as a condition of pretrial release, will take effect Sept. 18, making Illinois the first state to end cash bail and a testing ground for whether—and how—it works on a large scale.

Judges can still keep people accused of serious crimes behind bars pretrial, but first would have to go through a more rigorous review of each case.

Critics say cash bail policies are especially unfair to Black people and other people of color. A 2022 federal civil rights report on cash bail systems found that courts tend to impose higher pretrial detention penalties on Black and Latino people, citing a study that showed Black men received bail amounts 35% higher than white men, and Latino men received bail amounts 19% higher than white men.

Cook County Public Defender Sharone Mitchell Jr. described Illinois' previous cash bail system as "a cousin to slavery."

"The vast majority of people in the system are poor, and they're Black and brown, and they have no power. It is an incredibly unfair system," he said. "You go to a bond hearing, it sounds like a slave auction. People are talking very fast. They're putting price tags on people's freedom."

Between 1970 and 2015, there was a fivefold increase in the number of people jailed before trials, according to the 2022 U.S. Commission on Civil Rights report. Data shows more than 60% of defendants were detained prior to trial because they couldn't afford to post bail, and that nearly 74% of the 631,000 people jailed daily in the United States are awaiting trial.

Typically in state courts, a judge decides if a defendant poses too much of a threat to the community to be released, or if they can be freed with conditions, according to the nonprofit Bail Project.

Some states have tried to ease cash bail rules.

In 2017, New Jersey essentially replaced its cash bail system with a risk assessment process that gauged the potential danger a released defendant could pose to the community. But cash bail is still allowed in some instances in that state and others that have curtailed the practice, such as New York and Alaska.

California has made several efforts to reform its cash bail system, but lawmakers balked at sweeping reform.

Asia

ASIAN BRIEFS

Aung San Suu Kyi ailing but denied care outside prison

BANGKOK (AP)—Myanmar's imprisoned former leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, is suffering from symptoms of low blood pressure including dizziness and loss of appetite, but has been denied treatment at qualified facilities outside the prison system, a medical worker said Thursday. Suu Kyi, 78, who was arrested in February 2021 when the army seized power from her elected government, fell ill late last month, said the medical worker, who spoke on the condition of anonymity for fear of being punished by the military authorities. Separately, a military officer who also insisted on anonymity confirmed a report by the BBC's Myanmar-language service that Suu Kyi was suffering a severe toothache that left her unable to eat and caused vomiting. However, the ruling military council's spokesperson, Maj. Gen. Zaw Min Tun, said Suu Kyi was in good health, the report said. The BBC said Suu Kyi's son Kim Aris, who lives in Britain, responded to the report with a text saying, "To deny a sick prisoner access to recommended medical care is callous and cruel."

Kim Jong Un arrives in Russia before an expected meeting with Putin

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—Joined by his top military officials handling his nuclear-capable weapons and munitions factories, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un arrived in Russia on Tuesday before an expected meeting with President Vladimir Putin that has sparked concerns about a potential arms deal for Moscow's war in Ukraine. North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency said Kim boarded his personal train Sunday afternoon accompanied by unspecified members of the country's ruling party, government and military. South Korea's military assessed the train crossed into Russia sometime early Tuesday, Jeon Ha Gyu, spokesperson of South Korea's Defense Ministry, said in a briefing without elaborating on how the military obtained the information. Kim's delegation likely includes his foreign minister, Choe Sun Hui, and his top two military officials—Korean People's Army Marshals Ri Pyong Chol and Pak Jong Chon.

Fukushima nuclear plant's operator says first round of wastewater release complete

TOKYO (AP)—The operator of the wrecked Fukushima nuclear power plant said Monday that it has safely completed the first release of treated radioactive water from the plant into the sea and will inspect and clean the facility before starting the second round in a few weeks. The Fukushima Daiichi plant began discharging the treated and diluted wastewater into the Pacific Ocean on Aug. 24. The water has accumulated since the plant was damaged by a massive earthquake and tsunami in 2011, and the start of its release is a milestone in the plant's decommissioning. The discharge, which is expected to continue for decades until the decommissioning is finished, has been strongly opposed by fishing groups and by neighboring countries. China has banned all imports of Japanese seafood in response, hurting producers and exporters and prompting the Japanese government to compile an emergency relief fund. Groups in South Korea have also fiercely protested, demanding Japan stop the release. Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, at summits last week of Southeast Asian countries and the Group of 20 nations, stressed the safety and transparency of the release to win international support and sought the immediate lifting of China's ban.

Thailand's new PM tells Parliament his government will urgently tackle economic woes

BANGKOK (AP)—Thailand's new Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin vowed to act quickly to relieve the country's economic problems in his inaugural speech to Parliament on Monday, following four months of political uncertainty while parliamentarians were unable to agree on a government. Srettha entered politics after a career as a major real estate developer, and his government is facing high expectations and pressing demands to address a range of economic, political, social and environmental problems in its four-year term. Thailand's economy has slumped after the COVID-19 pandemic all but crippled its lucrative tourism industry. Public debt rose to more than 60% of GDP in 2023, while household debt spiked to over 90% of the GDP this year, he said. Thailand's post-pandemic economy is like "a sick person," with a sluggish recovery that puts the nation "at risk of entering a recession," Srettha said. He vowed to quickly take measures to relieve debt problems, mitigate rising energy costs and boost tourism, without going into detail.

7 people died in storms in southern China, 70 crocodiles reported to be on the loose

BEIJING (AP)—Rainstorms battering southern China have killed at least seven people and allowed dozens of crocodiles to escape from a farm. Nearby residents were advised to stay at home after more than 70 crocodiles escaped in Maoming, a city near the coast in western Guangdong province, according to Chinese media reports. An emergency official was quoted as saying that 69 adult crocodiles and six juveniles had escaped. Some have been captured, but the operation was difficult because of the depth of a lake they are in, the media reports said. No injuries have been reported. Further west, seven people died and three are missing after multiple landslides in the city of Yulin in the Guangxi region, the official Xinhua News Agency reported late Monday. Heavy rain on Sunday and Monday triggered the landslides. The rain caused flash floods in Hong Kong last week, killing two people. Parts of the city were flooded again following a heavy downpour Monday. Puddles of water and debris could still be seen. Hong Kong leader John Lee said the government would set up an emergency assistance fund to help those affected by the floods.

Roadside bombing in northwestern Pakistan kills security officer, wounds 9 people

PESHAWAR, Pakistan (AP)—A roadside bombing targeted Pakistani security forces Monday in the northwestern city of Peshawar, killing a security officer and wounding nine people, including three civilians, police said. The Pakistani Taliban later claimed responsibility for the attack. The improvised explosive device went off near a van belonging to the Frontier Corps as it was driving along the key Warsak Road in Peshawar. Police spokesman Bilal Ahmed Faizi said the bomb also wounded three passersby. An investigation was underway, police officer Syed Ashfaq Anwar said. The wounded were moved to the Peshawar military hospital. The outlawed Pakistani Taliban, known as Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan or TTP, have intensified their attacks on Pakistani security forces since pulling out of a unilateral cease-fire agreement with the government last November.

World

Flooding in Libya leaves 2,000 people feared dead

AP

In this photo provided by the Libyan government, cars and rubble sit in a street in Derna, Libya, on Monday, Sept. 11, 2023, after it was flooded by heavy rains.

CAIRO (AP)—Mediterranean storm Daniel caused devastating floods in Libya that broke dams and swept away entire neighborhoods in multiple coastal towns in the east of the North African nation. As many as 2,000 people were feared dead, one of the country's leaders said Monday.

The destruction appeared greatest in Derna, a city formerly held by Islamic extremists in the chaos that has gripped Libya for more than a decade and left it with crumbling and inadequate infrastructure. Libya remains divided between two rival administrations, one in the east and one in the west, each backed by militias and foreign governments.

The confirmed death toll from the weekend flooding stood at 61 as of late Monday, according to health authorities. But the tally did not include Derna, which had become inaccessible, and many of the thousands missing there were believed carried away by waters after two upstream dams burst.

Video by residents of the city posted online showed major devastation. Entire residential areas were erased along a river that runs down from the mountains through the city center. Multistory apartment buildings that once stood well back from the river were partially collapsed into the mud.

In a phone interview with station Monday, Prime Minister Ossama Hamad of the east Libyan government said 2,000 were feared dead in Derna and thousands were believed missing. He said Derna has been declared a disaster zone.

Ahmed al-Mosmari, a spokesman for the country's armed forces based in the east, told a news conference that the death toll in Derna had surpassed 2,000. He said there were between 5,000 and 6,000 reported missing. Al-Mosmari attributed the catastrophe to the collapse of two nearby dams, causing a lethal flash flood.

Since a 2011 uprising that toppled and later killed longtime ruler Moammar Gadhafi, Libya has lacked a central government and the resulting lawlessness has meant dwindling investment in the country's roads and public services and also minimal regulation of private building. The country is now split between rival governments in the east and west, each backed by an array of militias.

Ukraine claims to recapture Black Sea oil platforms seized during Crimea annexation

KYIV, Ukraine (AP)—The Ukrainian military said Monday that it recaptured strategic gas and oil drilling platforms from Russia in the Black Sea and claimed gains in occupied areas near Bakhmut, a city in eastern Ukraine left in ruins after the war's longest and deadliest fighting.

The recapture of the so-called Boyko Towers platforms provides an energy source and takes back an asset that Russia seized in 2015 and used to launch helicopters, Ukraine's Ministry of Defense said.

"Russia has been deprived of the ability to fully control the waters of the Black Sea, and this makes Ukraine many steps closer to regaining Crimea," the Main Intelligence Directorate said.

The Russian Defense Ministry didn't make any immediate comment on the Ukrainian claim, but it has previously reported that Russian warplanes destroyed several Ukrainian speedboats in the area.

Russian military bloggers posted that the platforms had been uninhabited for more than a year and a Ukrainian operation to briefly land troops there last month wasn't followed by a lasting military presence and came at a heavy cost for Ukraine, a claim that couldn't be independently verified.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has vowed to do all he can to bring back Crimea, which Russia annexed from Ukraine in 2014, and has urged international allies to support the effort.

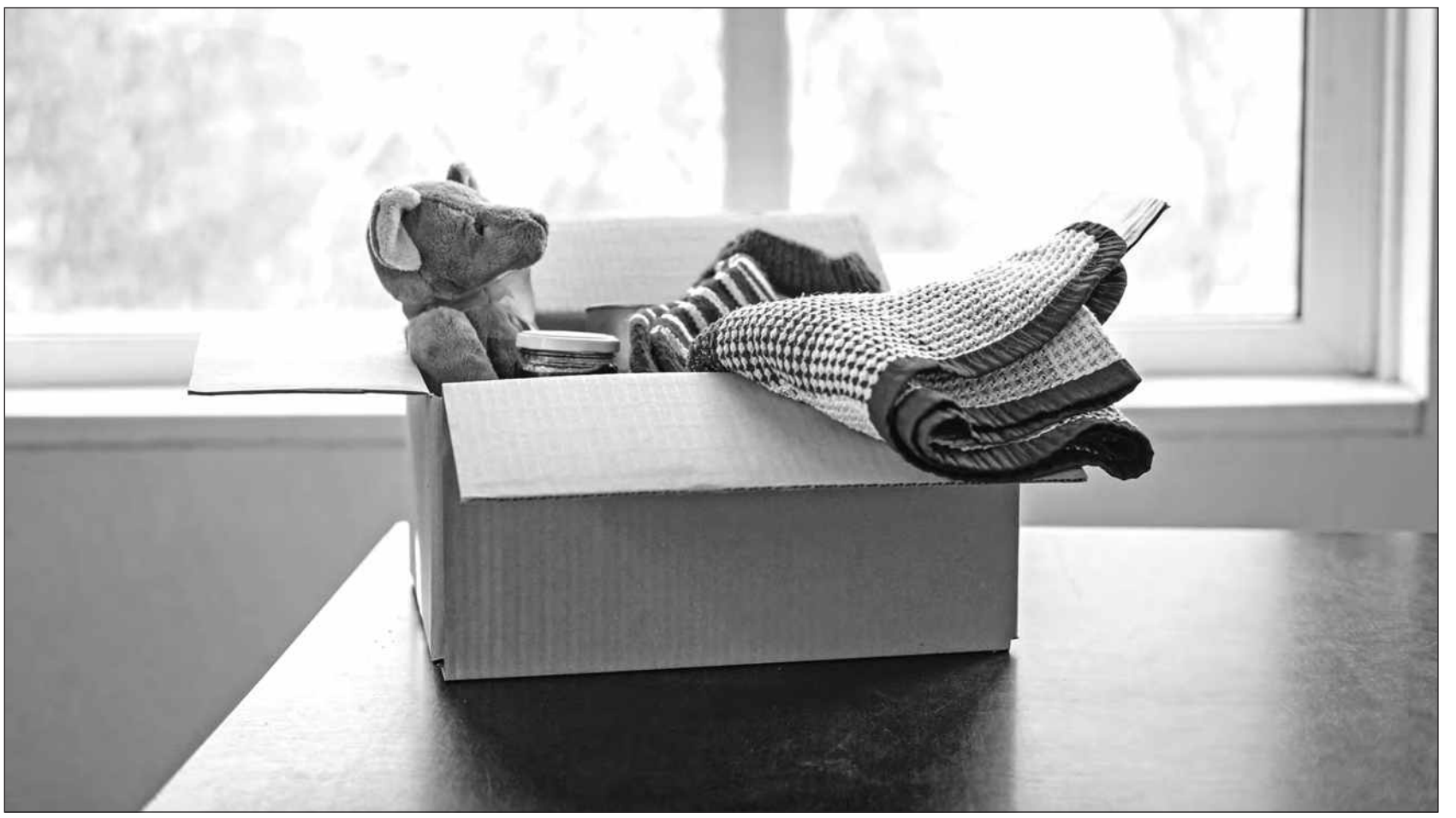
Ukraine's reported battlefront gains, which could not be independently confirmed, came ahead of a meeting expected in coming days between Russian President Vladimir Putin and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, which could include discussions of North Korea providing arms to restock Russia's dwindling arsenal.

In other developments, German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock made an unannounced visit to Kyiv, Ukraine's capital. She promised support for Ukraine's path toward European Union membership while calling for additional reforms in the country.

Good Housekeeping

There's no clean break when you're cleaning out a grown kid's room

By JAMES LIKEKS
Star Tribune



TNS

Eventually, the things we want to remember end up in a box that we store next to other boxes of things we want to remember.

You're either a saver or a tosser. Your instinct says, "Hold on, it might be useful for a future moment of sentimental recollection," or you stuff it in the trash, because, really, what are you going to do, look at it and get misty and then throw it away? No, you'll still save it, because it gave you a little nostalgic reverie, and in the future you might be nostalgic for the time this thing made you nostalgic.

My wife is ruthless about these things. It is impossible to describe how little ruth she has. Savers marry tossers, just as "get to the airport three hours early" people marry people who start to pack around the time Zone 1 passengers are boarding. So she was pleased when I, a saver, decided to clean out Daughter's room. Too soon, I'd always thought. But it's been half a decade.

At some point, every empty-nester faces the difficult task of strenuous winnowing of your child's left-behind items. If you don't, it looks like a shrine to childhood, a frozen state of late adolescence. All the things you were, that made you who you are, arrayed on shelves. The reminders of friends who faded away, brief fancies, hobbies that cooled, high school days that seemed so fraught and dramatic at the time and now seem like a lark, a stroll.

The trick is to declutter without removing the essence, the personality. You can't editorialize, choosing items that suggest the things the parents approved or preferred. Not all the Harry Potter books, but one. Not all the snow globes, but one from a place she went alone. The notebooks are set aside, even though there's only a few pages of writing and sketches. Not your call.

The jewelry in the drawers goes into a box—so many small bright things, so many pins and chains and earrings, all tangled together, waiting for the moment when they strike her eye again.

You pick up some gilded thing, a pin with a saucy saying, an object of obscure provenance that must have had meaning to earn pride of place on a shelf, and it speaks to an inner life you couldn't know, a wealth of stories never related.

You know she got this pin in Japan, but what was the day like? The sounds of the street outside the shop, the smell of the restaurants, the emotions of being on the other side of the world, the pride at speaking the language and counting out the right amount of coins? That's one object. There are a hundred.

Away in a box, filed in the basement, next to the box of things your parents saved for you. Next to the box of things that belonged to your parents. A private Smithsonian, three generations in three bins, perhaps a curse to be dragged from here to there until it's dispersed to the antique stores, where it's relieved of all meaning and finds a new home.

If it truly meant something, you think, they would have taken it—but no, they struck out for terra incognito and wanted to travel light. They trusted you to safeguard the evidence of childhood, and so you save instead of toss.

My father was a tosser, but he saved his childhood baseball uniform. The Harwood Hawks, a North Dakota team in the late 1930s. It has no use; it takes up space in a bin in the storage closet. It's not the first thing I'd try to save in a fire, but I'll never toss it. Someday Daughter will find it and remember him, whom she loved.

And then she'll let it go, because the moment of remembering was the end of it. He'd be happy to know she was the one who sent it into the antique-store stream.

I guess this is a roundabout way of telling Daughter that I gave away all her Hello Kittys, and when she reads this she'll know it was inevitable.

And also, she will know: I saved one.

Ask Angi: What should I look for when hiring a plumber?

By PAUL F.P. POGUE
Ask Angi

Some problems requiring professional help will always develop, as certain as the sun rising in the east. And foremost among those professions is that of the reliable plumber.

Whether you've got frozen pipes, a clogged toilet or a busted water main turning your basement into an impromptu swimming pool, you'll inevitably need the help of a plumbing pro.

Plumbing stands alongside HVAC and electricity as the lifeblood of your home, the infrastructure behind the walls that makes modern conveniences work. With that much at stake, you want a pro you can rely on.

By the way, the best time to call a plumber for an emergency is long before the emergency happens. In other words, find a good plumbing pro when everything looks to be in good working order, and hire them to conduct an inspection of your plumbing.

Not only will you find small problems before they get out of hand, but you'll also build a relationship with a plumber that could last a lifetime. You'll feel better knowing the same team is working on your house every time.

Plus, when you've got the relationship established, you'll know who to call if your pipes blow out on Christmas Eve, rather than just going through the phone book and hoping for the best.

When hiring a plumber, ask these questions:

1. Who will be doing the work?

TNS

Strange as it may sound, the best time to hire a plumber is before emergencies develop.

This is a good question for many contractors, but it's particularly relevant for plumbers. Plumbers are usually apprentices, journeymen or masters. Each title carries different levels of expertise. You also want to know if the plumber giving you the quote is the one doing the work.

2. Does this job require a permit?

Local rules vary, but smaller plumbing jobs usually don't need to have a permit. Anytime you're replacing or moving water pipes, though, a permit is usually required. Be cautious of contractors who wave off the necessity of permits.

3. What's your plan if something goes wrong?

Plumbing problems can quickly wreak havoc. Indeed, uncontrolled water flow can be one of the most damaging problems your home may ever encounter. Make sure your plumber has a plan for when something breaks.

4. Can you give me a total cost in writing?

Make sure any estimate you're given includes labor, materials and a contingency plan for problems. Unscrupulous contractors will often tack on surprise fees after the initial quote.

5. Are you experienced with my particular problem?

Different issues pose different challenges. Make sure your plumber is familiar with this kind of work.

6. Are you licensed, bonded and insured?

Different cities and states have their own requirements. Make sure your plumber meets local regulations. Don't just take their word for it; ask for it in writing. Licensed contractors will never object to showing proof.

7. What kind of warranty do you offer?

Any reliable contractor will guarantee their work. Materials often have their own warranty. Make sure you know labor and material warranties in writing.

Tweet your home care questions with #AskingAngi and we'll try to answer them in a future column.

Life & Style

MTV Video Music Awards return with an all-female artist of the year category

LOS ANGELES (AP)—The MTV Video Music Awards return Tuesday night, and for the first time, only women are nominated in the show's artist of the year category. Taylor Swift, Beyoncé, Doja Cat, Nicki Minaj, Karol G and Shakira are contending for the night's top prize.

The VMAs, which takes place at the Prudential Center in Newark, New Jersey—just outside of New York City—will be hosted by Minaj. Last year, she emceed alongside Lil Wayne and Jack Harlow; this year, she's solo.

The show will also celebrate 50 years of hip-hop with a star-studded, multi-generational finale performance: DMC, Doug E. Fresh, Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five, LL Cool J and Minaj will join forces.

The VMAs kick off at 8 p.m. EDT/PDT on Tuesday and will air on MTV and simulcast on BET, BET Her, CMT, Comedy Central, Logo, MTV2, Nickelodeon, Paramount Network, Pop, TVLand and VH1. The show will also air in Spanish on UniMás.

Swift leads the nominations with eight—seven for her "Anti-Hero" music video and a nod in the artist of the year category—followed by SZA, who has six. Swift currently has 14 VMAs to her name, placing her behind Beyoncé, who has 28 (including two with Destiny's Child), Madonna, who has 20 awards, and Lady Gaga, who has 19.

AP

This combination of photos shows all female nominees for artist of the year for the MTV Video Music Awards, top row from left, Beyonce, Doja Cat, Karol G, bottom row from left, Nicki Minaj, Taylor Swift and Shakira.

This year features a record number of first-time nominees at 35: including Kim Petras, Metro Boomin' and Rema, who boast three noms apiece. Reneé Rapp, Aespa, Burna Boy, Davido, Eslabon Armado, FIFTY FIFTY, PinkPantheress, Saucy Santana, Stephen Sanchez and Toosii are also nominated for the first time.

Shakira will receive the Video Vanguard Award and is also expected to perform. Previous recipients include Beyoncé, Nicki Minaj, Madonna, Janet Jackson, Jennifer Lopez, Rihanna, and Missy Elliott.

Diddy will receive the Global Icon Award and perform at the VMAs for the first time since 2005. He will become the third recipient of the award, following the Red Hot Chili Peppers in 2022 and the Foo Fighters in 2021.

Other scheduled performers include Cardi B and Megan Thee Stallion (performing their new collaboration, "Bongos"), Anitta, Demi Lovato, Fall Out Boy, Peso Pluma, Doja Cat, Karol G, Kelsea Ballerini, Måneskin, Olivia Rodrigo, Stray Kids, Tomorrow X Together and more.

Illinois appeals court to hear arguments on Jussie Smollett request to toss convictions

CHICAGO (AP)—Jussie Smollett's drawn out legal saga begins anew Tuesday when an Illinois appeals court will hear oral arguments that the former "Empire" actor's convictions for staging a racist, homophobic attack against himself in 2019 and then lying about it to Chicago police should be tossed.

If the appeal before the Chicago-based First District Appellate Court fails, Smollett would have to finish a 150-day stint in jail that his trial judge ordered during his 2022 sentencing. Smollett spent just six days in jail before his release pending the outcome of the appeal. A ruling is expected to take several weeks.

Among a long list of arguments in the 76-page written appeal from Smollett's lawyers is that his 2021 trial violated his Fifth Amendment protections against double jeopardy—being punished for the same crime twice. It says he already performed community service and forfeited a $10,000 bond as part of a 2019 deal with the Cook County State's Attorney's Office to drop the initial charges.

AP

Actor Jussie Smollett, center, leaves the Cook County Jail, March 16, 2022, in Chicago.

Smollett, who is Black and gay, was the target of a racist justice system and people playing politics, Nenye Uche, one of his lawyers, told reporters last year. Uche criticized special prosecutor Dan Webb's decision to press for new charges in 2020. He also called the trial judge's sentence excessive for a low-level felony.

In the appeal, Smollett's legal team says chief prosecutor Kim Foxx's office used proper discretion to drop the original charges four years ago.

Hillary Clinton is stepping over White House threshold in yet another role

WASHINGTON (AP)—During her husband's 1992 presidential campaign, Hillary Clinton observed that "our lives are a mixture of different roles" and said most people are trying to find the right balance.

"For me, that balance is family, work and service," she said.

Clinton juggled those roles—and more—during eight years as first lady in the White House. She's returning Tuesday for her first public appearance in the building since the Obama years to indulge her love for the arts.

In her White House years, she was a wife, a mother and the nation's hostess, but also a wronged spouse, the head of a national health care task force and on the cover of Vogue. In later years, she stepped over the White House threshold as a visiting senator and Cabinet member, but never in the long-sought role of Madam President.

Early on as first lady, she held a rare news conference where she was grilled about the Clintons' past real estate dealings, declaring that she had been "rezoned" out of her sphere of privacy.

The former first lady and current first lady Jill Biden will appear together to announce the recipients of the Praemium Imperiale, an annual global arts prize for lifetime achievement by the Japan Art Association. Both women will deliver remarks.

Her return visit is likely to be a sentimental one.

"I have to imagine she's really looking forward to being back and being back with the Bidens, who she's been close to for a long time," said Lisa Caputo, who was Clinton's White House press secretary.

Young adult has trouble building relationships

DEAR ABBY: I'm 26 and not currently in a relationship. I don't have many friends. I'd like to have more, and I try. I wasn't popular in middle and high school, either. I have been in and out of college, so I haven't been able to make friends there. I have worked at my job for three years and it's the same story.

People say I'm "sweet, nice and cheerful," but those traits aren't helping me. I know you've written about this problem before. Can you give me some tips for being someone who others want to be around?

EAGER IN SOUTH CAROLINA

DEAR EAGER: The keys to being well-liked by both men and women are these: Be kind. Be honest. Be tactful. Don't be afraid of giving someone a compliment if it is deserved.

You do not have to be beautiful (or handsome) to put your best foot forward. Be well-groomed, tastefully dressed and conscious of your posture. (People who stand tall project self-confidence.) Stay informed about current events, but refrain from forcing your opinions on others. Ask them what they think and encourage them to share their opinions.

If you're smarter than most, resist the temptation to be a know-it-all. Good conversationalists are interested in what others have to say rather than filling the air with the sound of their own voices. Cultivate your own interests so you will have things to talk about with others.

My booklet, "How To Be Popular" contains many other tips on how to approach others, and what to say and not to say when trying to make conversation. It can be ordered by sending your name and address, plus a check or money order for $8 (U.S. funds), to: Dear Abby Popularity Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. Shipping and handling are included in the price.

Above all, remember that social adeptness isn't something that comes naturally to everyone. It is a skill that needs to be practiced until it becomes second nature. When you receive your booklet, don't read it just once. Keep it on hand for reference because it contains many helpful suggestions about how to be the kind of individual others find interesting and attractive.

■■■

DEAR ABBY: I am a man who has been married to my husband for two years. My problem is his brother. He tries to sabotage our marriage every chance he gets -- from making rude comments to propositioning me and sending me nude pics of himself. The other problem is, my husband always takes his brother's side. He knows his brother is dysfunctional but insists I should keep giving him another chance even though, when I have, it never turns out well. What should I do?

BUGGED IN ARIZONA

DEAR BUGGED: So your brother-in-law has the hots for you, and your husband is in denial. It may take couples counseling to help him see the light. In the meantime, spend as little time around the brother as possible and, when you are forced to be in his company, do not be alone in a room with him.

■■■

DEAR ABBY
BY ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

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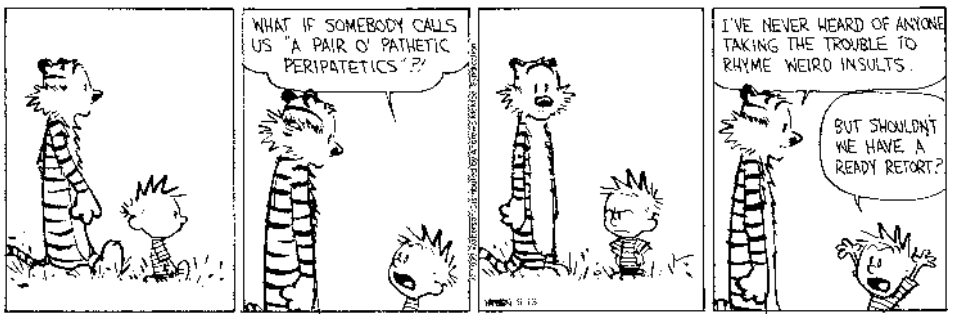
Pastimes

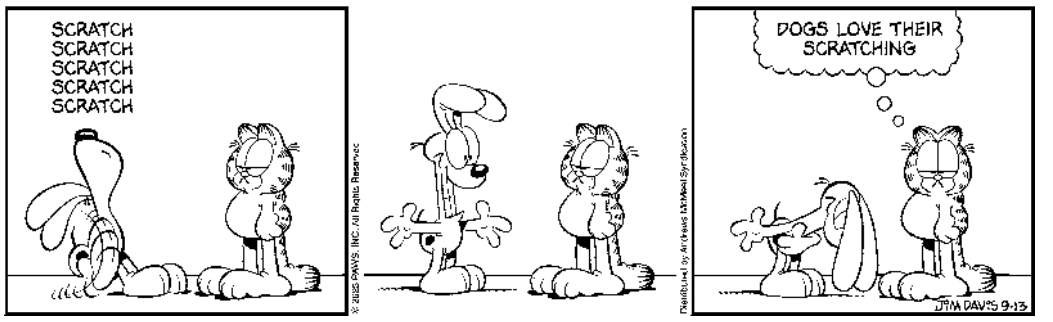
Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson


WHAT IF SOMEBODY CALLS US "A PAIR O' PATHETIC PERIPATETICS"?!
I'VE NEVER HEARD OF ANYONE TAKING THE TROUBLE TO RHYME WEIRD INSULTS.
BUT SHOULDN'T WE HAVE A READY RETORT?

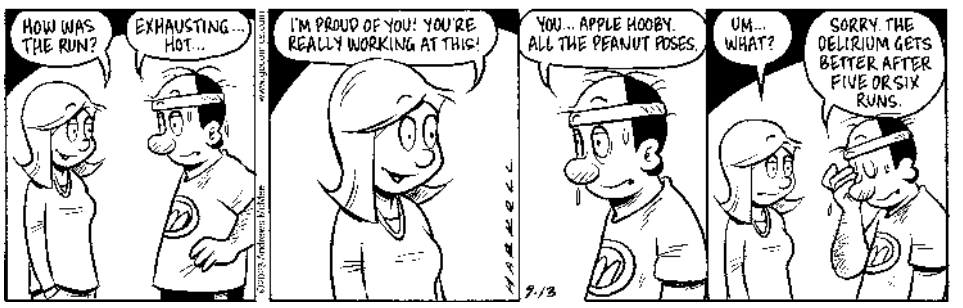
Garfield®

By Jim Davis



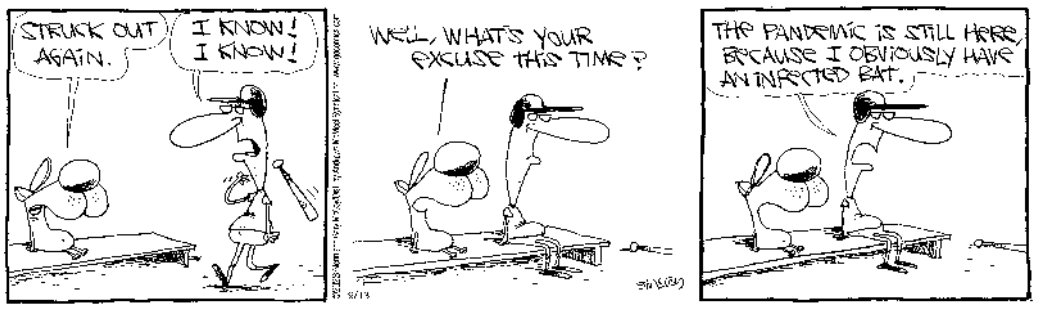
Adam@home

By Bryan Basset


HOW WAS THE RUN?
EXHAUSTING... HOT...
I'M PROUD OF YOU! YOU'RE REALLY WORKING AT THIS!
YOU... APPLE HOOBY. ALL THE PEANUT POSES.
UM... WHAT?
SORRY. THE DELIRIUM GETS BETTER AFTER FIVE OR SIX RUNS.
9/13

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy


STRUCK OUT AGAIN.
I KNOW! I KNOW!
WELL, WHAT'S YOUR EXCUSE THIS TIME?
THE PANDEMIC IS STILL HERE, BECAUSE I OBVIOUSLY HAVE AN INFECTED BAT.

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS
1 Hot tub
4 Craving
8 Ella's style
12 Up to
13 Pisa farewell
14 Story
15 French article
16 Payments to a speaker
18 Russian villa
20 Capita lead-in
21 Recedes
24 "Barbie" director Gerwig
28 Teen drama starring Emmy winner Zendaya as Rue Bennett
32 Saint Laurent of fashion
33 Opposite of "post-"
34 Big name in tractors
36 Before
37 Disney exec Robert
39 Catholic prayer
41 "People" person
43 Biblical twin
44 Cow's chaw
46 "Bye Bye Bye" band
50 Temporary suspensions
55 Tic-tac-toe win
56 Trade
57 Falling-out
58 Spike's warning
59 Sawbucks
60 Church area
61 Rock concert booster

DOWN
1 Poker type
2 — colada
3 Actor Guinness
4 Crane of Sleepy Hollow
5 Uncle (Sp.)
6 Fire
7 Barrel part
8 Van Gogh's "— Night"
9 One for the road?
10 Foreman foe
11 Chai, e.g.
17 Rule, for short
19 Sneaky laugh
22 La — Tar Pits
23 Strainer
25 Always
26 Actress Hatcher
27 On the Baltic, say
28 Monumental
29 Incite
30 Rind
31 God of war
35 Arise (from)
38 Summaries
40 Ger. neighbor
42 However
45 TV explorer
47 "Lotus position" discipline
48 Standard
49 Business abbr.
50 Rockies hrs.
51 Have debts
52 Scooted
53 Tear
54 Conditions

Solution time: 23 mins.

R	I	S	K		L	I	E	V		S	B	A
A	R	E	A		A	C	R	E		P	O	T
J	E	A	N	S	M	A	R	T		A	Z	T
			S	E	E	N		E	L	R	O	Y
B	E	H	A	A			A	R	I	E		
A	L	E	S		B	I	G	A	P	P	L	E
A	E	A		A	M	E	N		A	E	S	
T	V	D	R	A	M	A	S		W	R	A	P
		S	H	I	A			P	A	T	S	Y
E	L	T	O	N		M	U	L	L			
B	A	A		B	E	R	R	Y	T	A	R	T
B	R	A		O	T	I	S		E	R	L	E
S	A	T		W	A	S	A		R	I	S	E

Yesterday's answer 9-13

1	2	3	■	4	5	6	7	■	8	9	10	11
12			■	13				■	14			
15			■	16				17				
18			19		■	■	20			■	■	■
■	■	■	21		22	23	■	24		25	26	27
28	29	30					31	■	32			
33			■	34				35	■	36		
37			38	■	39				40			
41				42	■	43				■	■	■
■	■	■	44		45	■	■	46		47	48	49
50	51	52				53	54		■	55		
56				■	57					58		
59				■	60				■	61		

STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Lili Reinhart, 27; Ben Savage, 43; Jean Smart, 72; Jacqueline Bisset, 79.

Happy Birthday: Maintain control regardless of what's happening around you this year, and you'll gain respect and momentum. Keep your eye on the target and shoot for the stars. You have plenty to achieve if you are meticulous in presenting what you want to those in high places. A positive attitude will lead to a new connection, unexpected perks and a new lease on life. Your numbers are 6, 10, 22, 26, 34, 37, 48.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19):* Put a spin on whatever you do. Your speed and agility will not go unnoticed, giving you the edge in any competitive situation. Don't waste your time or energy on anger set off by someone trying to make you look bad. ✪✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20):* Use your time wisely. Put your energy into something that helps you get ahead. Call on trusted peers to contribute something worthwhile. Don't be afraid to demonstrate what you have to offer. A unique idea explained in simple terms will pay off. ✪✪✪✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20):* Bypass unfair or overly dramatic situations. You'll do best if you work alone and focus on getting things done on time and to your specification. Verify information before you pass it along. Someone will exaggerate or tempt you with false promises. ✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22):* Think before you respond. Look for positive solutions and be willing to compromise when dealing with complicated situations. An act of kindness will give you more leeway to convince others to consider your suggestions. A change at home will put your mind at ease. ✪✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22):* Pick up the pace and complete unfinished business. Clear some time to make plans and prep for something that excites you. Let someone special know how much you care, and put a budget in place that positions you to pursue your desires successfully. ✪✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22):* Scrutinize the information you receive. Find the best way to respond and handle anyone trying to push you in a direction you don't care to go. Adjust whatever's necessary to get the changes you want in place. Trust your instincts, not someone else's bravado. ✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22):* Put juice in your engine and laziness on the shelf. It's time to engage in activities that get your heart pumping. Connect with like-minded people and see what develops. Expand your mind, pursue your dreams and be open to truth, love and new beginnings. ✪✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21):* Rethink your course of action, what you are trying to achieve, and how best to use or present what you offer to the world. Mix originality with discipline and dedication to a cause that excites you and you'll drum up interest. ✪✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21):* Do your own thing and ignore those trying to mess with your mind or interfere with your plans. Trust your instincts, follow your heart and protect your interests. ✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19):* Cut deals, sign contracts and invest in your home and lifestyle. Set the rules, live life your way and have no regrets. You are overdue for an overhaul that will help you shed dead weight. Declutter your life and move forward. ✪✪✪✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18):* Take a fresh look at an old idea and update it to accommodate your situation. An energetic approach to getting things done will help you draw positive attention and support. Adopt a healthy routine conducive to building strength, agility and confidence. ✪✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20):* Call on those you can count on and share your ideas. The input you receive will spark your imagination and help birth an efficient and doable plan. A partnership and contributions look promising. Set a budget that's conducive to completing your mission. ✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are thoughtful, perceptive and caring. You are curious and proactive.

✪: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ✪✪: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ✪✪✪: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ✪✪✪✪: Aim high; start new projects. ✪✪✪✪✪: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

4	1	3		5	2	6		
5		8					3	1
	2	6			1			
		1	6			4		
	3	2	5	8				
8	9							
1		9					8	
			1	6		5		
		5	3				4	

Difficulty: ★★★ 9/13

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Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer

6	8	2	5	4	7	3	9	1
9	3	5	1	6	2	4	7	8
7	1	4	9	3	8	6	2	5
8	2	3	4	7	5	1	6	9
4	6	9	3	8	1	7	5	2
5	7	1	6	2	9	8	3	4
3	4	8	2	5	6	9	1	7
2	9	7	8	1	3	5	4	6
1	5	6	7	9	4	2	8	3

Difficulty: ★★ 9/12

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the **WONDERWORD.**

RULE BOOKS Solution: 8 letters

S	C	I	N	O	M	E	N	M	N	O	I	T	C	A
D	E	C	N	E	I	D	U	A	E	V	I	R	D	E
R	G	R	L	O	E	M	R	E	T	P	V	V	I	D
A	A	T	U	E	C	X	F	A	S	F	I	L	R	I
C	T	S	E	T	A	L	A	I	F	C	S	A	E	N
O	S	I	N	E	C	R	A	M	E	T	U	W	C	S
M	Y	L	E	X	H	I	D	R	P	W	A	S	T	T
P	R	A	K	T	I	S	P	E	I	L	L	T	I	R
E	A	B	O	C	Y	D	Z	N	B	F	E	E	O	U
T	S	E	T	M	D	I	N	I	O	A	Y	P	N	C
I	S	L	B	E	N	E	A	E	M	I	T	S	O	T
T	O	O	S	A	R	E	C	I	P	E	T	E	C	I
I	L	I	G	C	I	F	I	C	E	P	S	C	I	O
O	G	R	W	R	I	T	E	L	G	O	A	L	E	N
N	O	I	T	S	E	U	Q	Y	R	A	M	M	U	S

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Action, Advice, Appendix, Audience, Cards, Clarify, Clear, Competition, Debate, Design, Direction, Draft, Drive, Example, Glossary, Goal, Icon, Idea, Instructions, Label, Laws, List, Mnemonics, Organize, Pictures, Question, Recipe, Section, Sheet, Specific, Stage, Steps, Summary, Symbol, Team, Term, Text, Tips, Token, Visual, Winner, Write

Yesterday's Answer: Carton

The NEW **Wonderword Grand Millennium #1** in LARGE PRINT is now available at www.WonderWordBooks.com or call 1-800-642-6480. (In Canada, call 1-855-232-2367)

Jets lose Rodgers to Achilles tendon injury, then rally to stun Bills in OT

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. (AP)—The New York Jets pulled off one of their most exciting and unlikely victories in years—and still couldn't completely enjoy it.

Not with knowing they might have to go the rest of the way without their leader.

Aaron Rodgers was knocked out of the Jets' 22-16 overtime win over the Buffalo Bills just four snaps into his debut on Monday night with what coach Robert Saleh said is believed to be an injured left Achilles tendon.

"It caught us off guard," cornerback Sauce Gardner said. "But we dedicated winning the game to him."

Rodgers was sacked by Buffalo's Leonard Floyd and fell awkwardly on the leg. Saleh said the 39-year-old Rodgers would have the MRI on Tuesday after X-rays during the game were negative.

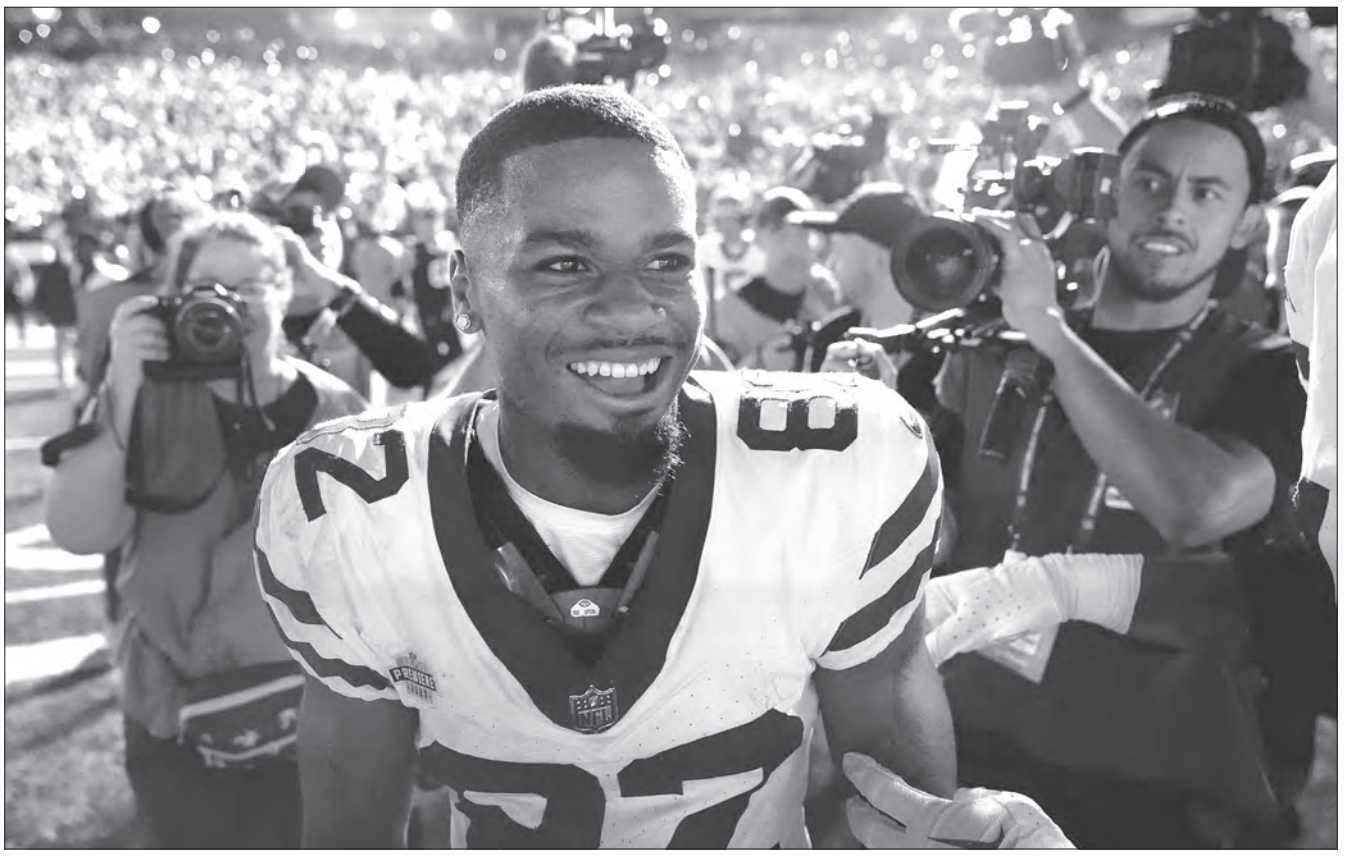
"Concerned with his Achilles," a somber Saleh said. "MRI is probably going to confirm what we think is going to happen, so prayers tonight. But it's not good."

It cast a pall over the game—won when rookie Xavier Gipson returned a punt 65 yards for a touchdown—and perhaps the Jets' season.

"It has been a roller coaster of emotions," Gardner said.

New York's aggressive defense forced four turnovers from Buffalo's Josh Allen, who was picked off three times by Jordan Whitehead in a wild and often ugly season opener.

"We made it pretty hard on ourselves," Bills coach Sean McDermott said. "When you turn the ball over four times, it's hard to win in this league. You're playing two opponents: the one on the other sideline and yourself. That's what we did tonight and that's not the right formula to win games."



AP

New York Jets wide receiver Xavier Gipson (82) celebrates after running a punt return back for a touchdown against the Buffalo Bills in overtime of an NFL football game, Monday, Sept. 11, 2023, in East Rutherford, N.J.

With the game tied, Micheal Clemons forced a fumble by Allen that was recovered by Quinnen Williams, setting up Greg Zuerlein's third field goal—a 30-yarder—with 1:48 remaining to put the Jets ahead for the first time.

But Allen and the Bills had just enough time to get in scoring position again, and Tyler Bass' 50-yard kick hit the left upright before going over the crossbar to tie it at 16 with 2 seconds left in regulation.

After Buffalo went three-and-out to start overtime, Sam Martin punted 42 yards and Gipson fielded it, made a few moves early and then scampered down the left sideline, made a couple more cuts and zipped into the end zone to set off a huge celebration by his teammates.

Saleh was there to swarm Gipson, an undrafted rookie from Stephen F. Austin who made the team out of training camp.

"They've given me the opportunity and given me the chance," Gipson said. "I guess it was my time. My time came to light."

It was the third punt return for a TD in overtime in NFL history, with Gipson joining Arizona's Patrick Peterson (2011) and Kansas City's Tamarick Vanover (1995).

Meanwhile, Allen tied a career high with his four turnovers and fell to 0-5 in overtime, including playoff games.

"I cost our team tonight," said Allen, who was 29 of 41 for 236 yards and a touchdown to Stefon Diggs. "It sucks when you feel like the reason, and I am the reason we lost."

The Jets had tied it at 13 with 4:55 left on an acrobatic catch by Garrett Wilson, who tipped Zach Wilson's pass to himself with his right hand—and Tre'Davious White draped all over him—and corralled the ball as he fell on his back in the end zone.

A night that began with optimism for the Jets turned disappointing before the game was even four minutes old.

After a 26-yard run by Breece Hall on the Jets' opening play, Rodgers threw his first pass away after getting heavy pressure from Gregg Rousseau. Rodgers threw incomplete on the next play, but Terrel Bernard was called for defensive holding.

Then, Rodgers tried to avoid a rushing Floyd, who wrapped up the quarterback and took him down to the MetLife Stadium turf. Rodgers appeared to reach down at his leg before trainers attended to him. He stood up after a few moments, but needed help getting to New York's sideline.

Rodgers was taken to the blue medical tent to be examined—and then sat on a cart. Halfway to the locker room, he hopped off the cart and limped inside.

Zach Wilson replaced him just 3:45 into the game. Wilson, who finished 14 of 21 for 140 yards and the TD pass, is expected to start next Sunday at Dallas.

"My job as a quarterback is I've got to step up," Wilson said. "I've got to be as efficient as I can in that offense. Just a lot of emotions."

After Bass' 40-yard field goal on Buffalo's second offensive series put the Bills up 3-0, Zuerlein tied it with a 26-yarder to cap a drive jump-started by an 83-yard run by Hall. The second-year running back had his rookie season cut short last year in Week 7 when he tore the ACL in his left knee.

He spent the offseason working toward a comeback and made it to the opening game—and showed he's healthy just 11 months after a major knee injury.

He finished with 127 yards on 10 carries.

Dalvin Cook made his Jets debut, rushing for 33 yards on 13 carries and catching three passes for 26 yards. He also got bragging rights again on his brother James, a Bills running back.

James Cook, who's five years younger, had 46 yards on 12 carries and four receptions for 17 yards.

Dalvin's Vikings beat the Bills 33-30 in overtime last season in the brothers' first meeting.

Analysis: For USA Basketball, focus immediately shifts to Paris Olympics

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—There was a long flight awaiting USA Basketball on Monday. Manila to Los Angeles, about 13 hours on a chartered jet that didn't have the wi-fi that's necessary to communicate with the outside world from 30,000 feet. No texting, no emails.

That's unfortunate. Those were 13 hours where recruiting for Paris couldn't happen.

The World Cup is over. The U.S. didn't medal. The world proved again that the Americans, even with NBA players, are vulnerable on the international stage. And now, every bit of USA Basketball's focus shifts to the Paris Olympics—where the challenge will be even tougher than the World Cup, which again reminded the Americans how much the FIBA game has changed.

"The narrative about USA Basketball and FIBA, and do we need reminders, we're past that," U.S. coach Steve Kerr said. "These teams are really good."

Kerr will be at the Olympics next summer. His staff—Erik Spoelstra, Tyronn Lue and Mark Few—are also committed to the Paris Games. USA Basketball's team leadership, Grant Hill and Sean Ford, will spend the next few months trying to pick the right 12 players to accompany them to Paris.

The mission won't change: Gold or else. Silver won't be enough, bronze won't be enough, a repeat of Manila's fourth-place finish would be a disaster. The U.S. has gone to the Olympics in men's basketball 19 times and has won 19 medals, the last four of them gold. On paper, it looks easy. It is not, not anymore. It probably never will be easy again.

"I don't think as Americans and basketball players that we think that we can't lose," said USA Basketball legend Carmelo Anthony, who won four Olympic medals—three gold, one bronze—with the national team. "I think the fear of losing is what drives us and what keeps us going and wanting to win and feeling so bad after losses. We do a great job as an organization at (USA Basketball) as far as respecting the game. … But our players back in America, they know we have to compete."

And now USA Basketball will find out which ones want to compete on the high-risk, high-reward stage.

Win or lose at this World Cup, the U.S. brain trust knew it was going to have some serious roster decisions to make over the coming weeks and months. Some players from this World Cup team will almost certainly be retained for Paris—Mikal Bridges, Tyrese Haliburton and Austin Reaves clearly showed they fit in the international game, Josh Hart did everything the U.S. asked, and Jalen Brunson and Anthony Edwards are among those who will get strong looks.

"I'll never say no," said Bridges, who had a moment that'll go down in USA Basketball history—an intentional missed free throw and then a game-tying 3-pointer with 0.6 seconds left—to give the Americans a chance in the bronze-medal loss to Canada in Manila. "It's an honor, every time. Even though the outcome is not what we wanted, I wouldn't trade these six weeks, seven weeks away for nothing."

And then it becomes a matter of how many NBA stars that didn't play this summer will want to play next summer on the bigger Olympic stage and give up six or seven weeks like Bridges and his teammates did this summer.

Stephen Curry has talked about it. Kevin Durant should have an Olympic spot for as long as he wants. If LeBron James wants to play, he'll play. Bam Adebayo is planning to be in Paris after playing a significant role on the team that won in Tokyo two summers ago, Devin Booker and Jayson Tatum should be there as well, and Draymond Green wants to try to win more gold.

There will be no shortage of options because the Olympics are more appealing to most U.S. players than the World Cup is. More prestige, more attention, brighter lights, bigger stage.

"What we've tried to do is really learn what wins a FIBA game," Kerr said. "We've really studied everything about FIBA and the history of United States basketball. When we've won, what has been the reason. When we've lost, what has been the reason. We study all that stuff."

There is one big wild-card out there as well.

Joel Embiid.

The reigning NBA MVP is, in the international sense, a free agent. If he decides to play, and there's no reason to think otherwise, Embiid will be wearing red, white and blue next summer at the Paris Olympics. Those are the colors of the uniforms USA Basketball will be wearing. Those are also the colors of the uniforms France will be wearing.

Embiid is a true rarity: He was born in Cameroon, has French citizenship and became a U.S. citizen last year. And he's never played on a senior national team, so it's his call.

The Americans want him. The French want him. What he decides will go a long way toward determining who wins gold in Paris.

Let the recruiting begin.

Olson hits 50th homer for Braves, but Phillies win nightcap to split doubleheader

AP

Philadelphia Phillies' Jake Cave reacts after hitting a run-scoring triple against Atlanta Braves pitcher Kyle Wright during the fourth inning of the second baseball game in a doubleheader, Monday, Sept. 11, 2023, in Philadelphia.

PHILADELPHIA (AP)—Brandon Marsh homered, Jake Cave hit an RBI triple and the Philadelphia Phillies spoiled Matt Olson's 50th homer and salvaged a doubleheader split with a 7-5 win over the Atlanta Braves on Monday night.

Michael Harris II and Ronald Acuña Jr. went deep for the Braves in a 10-8, 10-inning win in the opener. Harris also homered in the nightcap.

Olson hit a three-run homer off the second deck in the third and added a solo shot for his MLB-best 50th in the sixth, both off Phillies starter Michael Lorenzen (9-9). Lorenzen gave up four runs in five innings. Craig Kimbrel worked the ninth for his 23rd save.

Right-hander Kyle Wright (0-2) made his first start since May 3 after being on the 60-day injured list with a strained right shoulder. He faced eight batters and allowed four runs in the first inning, with Edmundo Sosa doing the most damage on a two-RBI double off the left-field wall.

Kevin Pillar and Orlando Arcia each had run-scoring hits in the 10th off José Alvarado (0-2) in the first game. The Braves needed extras after Bryce Harper tied the game with a two-out, two-run homer in the ninth.

The Phillies came up empty in the 10th against Kirby Yates, who earned his fourth save.

ORIOLES 11, CARDINALS 5

BALTIMORE (AP)—Cedric Mullins hit a grand slam in the fifth inning, and Baltimore won the opener of a crucial homestand.

The Orioles entered the day with a three-game lead over Tampa Bay atop the AL East, and they host the Rays for a four-game series after St. Louis leaves. Baltimore trailed 5-4 when Mullins hit a drive to right off reliever Andre Pallante, who had just replaced starter Dakota Hudson (6-2).

The Orioles withstood a shaky outing from Dean Kremer, who allowed five runs in 4 1/3 innings. D.L. Hall (1-0) won in relief.

Gunnar Henderson also homered for Baltimore. He and Aaron Hicks each had three hits.

RAYS 7, TWINS 4

MINNEAPOLIS (AP)—Yandy Díaz connected for his 20th homer and finished with four hits, helping Tampa Bay win for the sixth time in seven games.

After Tyler Glasnow (9-5) departed, Kevin Kelly, Jake Diekman and Pete Fairbanks each pitched a hitless inning. Fairbanks worked the ninth for his 23rd save. Glasnow was charged with four runs in six innings. He struck out eight and walked two.

Max Kepler and Royce Lewis homered for the AL Central-leading Twins, who finished with six hits. Sonny Gray (7-7) was charged with two runs, one earned, and six hits in four innings.

Taylor Walls lifted the Rays to a 5-1 lead in the fifth, hitting a three-run homer on an 0-2 pitch from Dylan Floro. It was his first homer since May 14 and No. 8 on the season.

ATHLETICS 4, ASTROS 0

HOUSTON (AP)—Ken Waldichuk pitched six hitless innings in relief and Brent Rooker hit the first of three home runs by Oakland in their victory over Houston.

Houston, which entered with a 2 1/2-game lead in the AL West over Seattle, fell to 9-2 against the last-place A's this season. Oakland improved to 45-99, delaying the team's 100th loss for at least another day.

Shea Langeliers and Ryan Noda also had solo homers for the A's.

Oakland opener Mason Miller pitched two innings and allowed one hit. Waldichuk (3-7) entered in the third and gave up just two baserunners, on a walk and a hit by pitch.

Framber Valdez (11-10) allowed three runs on four hits and one walk while striking out 10 in seven innings.

RANGERS 10, BLUE JAYS 4

TORONTO (AP)—Jonah Heim hit his third career grand slam, Evan Carter launched his first major league homer and Texas beat Toronto in the opener of a four-game series that could help decide the AL wild-card race.

Texas (79-64) closed within a half-game of Toronto (80-64) in the wild-card standings. The Blue Jays entered one game ahead of Seattle for the second American League wild card.

Dane Dunning (10-6) allowed three runs and six hits in six-plus innings, becoming the first Rangers starting pitcher to win since Jordan Montgomery beat the Angels on Aug. 15.

Chris Stratton, Martín Pérez and Ian Kennedy all worked one inning of relief.

Blue Jays right-hander Chris Bassitt (14-8) allowed five runs and nine hits in 5 1/3 innings. He walked three and struck out three.

ANGELS 8, MARINERS 5, 11 INNINGS

SEATTLE (AP)—Randal Grichuk singled home the tiebreaking run in the 11th inning and Los Angeles handed skidding Seattle a costly defeat.

Brandon Drury gave the Angels a 5-3 lead with a two-run homer in the 10th before Julio Rodríguez tied it again with a two-run shot in the bottom half. That gave Rodríguez 30 homers to go with 36 stolen bases, making him the second-youngest player in franchise history to join the 30-30 club behind Alex Rodriguez.

Julio Rodríguez is also just the fourth player in major league history to join the 30-30 club at age 22 or younger.

Nolan Schanuel also had an RBI single for the Angels in a three-run 11th. José Marte (1-0) gave up Rodríguez's tying homer but got the win. Jimmy Herget got three outs for his first save of the year.

Trent Thornton (0-2) took the loss, which dropped the Mariners a half-game out of playoff position. Seattle has lost four straight.

BREWERS 12, MARLINS 0

MILWAUKEE (AP)—Brandon Woodruff pitched a six-hitter and Willy Adames had four RBIs, helping Milwaukee blank the Marlins.

Adames delivered a triple and two doubles. Tyrone Taylor went 3 for 5 with two runs and two RBIs.

Woodruff (5-1) struck out seven and threw 106 pitches in his first nine-inning complete game.

Jesús Luzardo (9-9) lasted just five innings and was charged with six runs and 10 hits.

The Brewers added five runs—four earned—off Daniel Castano in the seventh. Miami fell so far behind that catcher Jacob Stallings pitched the eighth for the Marlins. Joey Wiemer hit an RBI double off him.

CUBS 5, ROCKIES 4

DENVER (AP)—Yan Gomes hit a two-run single in the ninth inning and Michael Fulmer stepped up at the very end, helping Chicago top Colorado.

Gomes finished with three hits and three RBIs. Christopher Morel homered and Dansby Swanson had two hits for Chicago in the opener of a six-game trip.

Drew Smyly (11-9) got four outs for the win, and Fulmer earned his second save of the season in his first big league appearance since Aug. 24.

Colorado left-hander Kyle Freeland was charged with three runs and eight hits over six innings.

The Cubs rallied against Tyler Kinley (0-2) in the ninth. Swanson led off with a double and Ian Happ walked. Following a double steal, Gomes drove in both runners with a liner to center.

DIAMONDBACKS 4, METS 3

NEW YORK (AP)—Tommy Pham hit a tying home run in the eighth inning to finish a triple short of the cycle in his return to Citi Field, Ketel Marte had a go-ahead double in the ninth and Arizona rallied for just its fourth win in 20 games against New York.

Pham, dealt by the Mets in their trade-deadline purge of veterans, doubled to start a two-run fourth against José Quintana and singled in the fifth. He greeted Trevor Gott by driving a slider to the opposite field in right-center for his 16th home run this season, sixth with the Diamondbacks.

Pinch-hitter Alek Thomas singled with one out in the ninth off Drew Smith (4-6), and Marte fisted an opposite-field double down the left-field line.

Kevin Ginkel (8-0) struck out two in a perfect eighth, and former Mets reliever Paul Sewald got his 33rd save in 38 chances this season—his 12th in 14 opportunities since the Diamondbacks acquired him from Seattle.

On the 22nd anniversary of the 9/11 terrorists attacks, the Mets wore caps of the New York Police Department, the Fire Department of New York, the Port Authority Police Department, Department of Sanitation and Department of Correction.

GIANTS 5, GUARDIANS 4, 10 INNINGS

SAN FRANCISCO (AP)—LaMonte Wade Jr. blooped a single in front of sliding center fielder Myles Straw in the 10th inning to drive in the winning run as San Francisco rallied past Cleveland.

The comeback victory kept the Giants just 1½ games behind Arizona for the third NL wild card. San Francisco has won four straight following a six-game slide.

Cleveland dropped its third in a row and remained 7 1/2 games back of first-place Minnesota in the AL Central.

After the Guardians went ahead 4-3 in the 10th on Andrés Giménez's RBI single, San Francisco answered with two runs to win. Blake Sabol singled off All-Star closer Emmanuel Clase (2-9) to drive in the tying run, then stole second and scored on Wade's hit.

Mike Yastrzemski homered for the Giants. Luke Jackson (2-2) won in relief.

Josh Naylor homered into McCovey Cove and had two RBIs for the Guardians.

PADRES 11, DODGERS 8

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Juan Soto hit a tiebreaking three-run homer in the ninth inning, and San Diego rallied from an early five-run deficit to beat Los Angeles.

Manny Machado homered twice for the Padres, who beat their NL West rivals for only the third time in 11 meetings this season. San Diego still had to withstand a perilous bottom of the ninth for closer Josh Hader, who got Chris Taylor on a weak liner to shortstop with the bases loaded to end it.

Xander Bogaerts capped San Diego's four-run ninth with a solo homer.

Mookie Betts hit another leadoff homer and added a three-run double while burnishing his NL MVP credentials for the division-leading Dodgers, who have lost seven of 11. Max Muncy launched his 35th home run, but Los Angeles' patchwork pitching staff squandered a 7-2 lead.

Robert Suárez (3-2) won in relief, his first appearance since serving a 10-game suspension for having a foreign substance on his wrist.

Evan Phillips (1-4) took the loss.

NATIONALS 6, PIRATES 2

PITTSBURGH (AP)—CJ Abrams homered twice, Patrick Corbin pitched into the seventh inning and Washington beat Pittsburgh.

Abrams hit a two-run shot to right-center against Andre Jackson (1-3) in the third inning. He drove a fastball from Cody Bolton over the 21-foot-high Clemente Wall in right in the seventh for his first career multihomer game.

Corbin allowed two runs and five hits in 6 2/3 innings to reach 10 wins for the first time since 2019. The 34-year-old Corbin (10-13) struck out eight and walked one.

Dominic Smith had two hits, including his eighth homer of the season. Keibert Ruiz and Ildemaro Vargas added two hits apiece for the Nationals, who won for just the third time in 11 games.

Bryan Reynolds had an RBI single for Pittsburgh, which lost for the third time in four games. Ji Hwan Bae added an RBI double. Jared Triolo had a hit and made a couple of solid plays defensively in his first major league start at first base.

SY 2023-2024 interscholastic sports comps underway

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

LEIGH GASES

Runners of the PSS/NMA All School Cross Country 2023-2024 are seen in the first qualifier of the season at the CPA Airport Field last Saturday.

With the school year 2022-2023 in full swing, the interscholastic school sports leagues are now back in session as well.

It was a rainy and wet start to the season with the first qualifier of the PSS/NMA All School Cross Country last Saturday, but everyone was in good spirits as the physical aspect of a well-rounded education and healthy lifestyle went underway.

High school girls volleyball, middle school basketball, co-ed elementary soccer, middle school soccer, are now back as well.

Nick Gross, Public School System Athletic Program director, said the Office of Student and Support Services "is excited to welcome back students throughout the CNMI and has been diligently working with our numerous national federation partners, schools, and coaches to prepare for the roll-out of SY23-24 programs!"

Gross said of the All Schools Cross Country kick-off, "Although the weather was dreadful and wet, the kids came out in awesome numbers with 200+ students!"

Qualifying events will continue on Sept. 16 at the American Memorial Park followed by the Sept. 30 Gecko 5000 at the Banzai lookout, and the final qualifying event, hosted by Kagman High School at ChaCha Middle School. The championships will be held at the Saipan Country Club (Saipan Vegas) on Oct 14.

The girls high school volleyball league started yesterday with games scheduled on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 4:45pm to 6:15pm.

It will showcase a total of 13 teams from Saipan, with Tinian and Rota sending squads for mid-season play and the Championship Tournament, from Oct. 19 to 21. Officiating competitions throughout the season will be conducted by the Northern Mariana Islands Volleyball Association.

The Northern Mariana Islands Basketball Federation, along with sponsor IT&E, is geared to begin the boys middle school basketball league today with a total of 13 teams. Games will be conducted Wednesdays and Fridays from 4:30m to 7pm with the double-elimination championship tournament scheduled for Oct. 26-28.

Gross added, "This is a busy quarter for soccer as we, along with the Northern Mariana Islands Football Association, will be conducting the co-ed elementary (12U, 5v5) and girls middle school (14U, 7v7) soccer leagues starting Sept. 18. These programs have continued to grow! We have 19 teams entered into the elementary league and are looking at eight teams in the girls middle school division."

"On behalf of the Public School System and Athletic Programs, we thank all the schools, coaches, parents, national federations, and most importantly, the students for their continued support and partnership to offer these meaningful athletic opportunities to the students of the CNMI!" said Gross.

For inquiries regarding Athletic Program activities or how to get involved with coaching, officiating, or volunteering, please contact Athletic Programs via email at athletics@cnmipss.org.

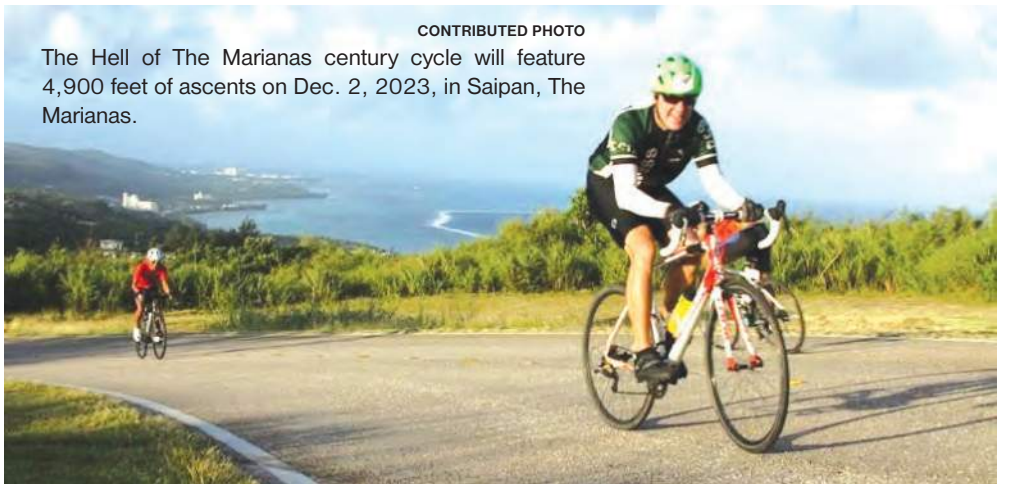
The results of the games will be published in the next issues of *Saipan Tribune*.

Registration growing for Hell of the Marianas Century Cycle

Online registration is open for the Hell of the Marianas, set to return on Dec. 2, 2023, to Saipan in The Marianas. About 70 cyclists have signed up at webscorer.com for the event, one of the toughest cycling events in the Pacific region.

Registration is $60 through Nov. 15, 2023, and $85 thereafter. Prizes will be awarded for male and female in the categories of Pro/Elite and age group. In addition to the 100K long course, a 50K short course (road and MTB) is also offered. Participants will also receive a race t-shirt and entry to the awards banquet.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



The Hell of The Marianas century cycle will feature 4,900 feet of ascents on Dec. 2, 2023, in Saipan, The Marianas.

The race, jointly organized by the Marianas Visitors Authority and Northern Mariana Islands Cycling Federation, attracts cyclists from around the world to take on the island's challenging terrain. Participating countries to date are South Korea, Guam, and Northern Marianas.

"Hell of The Marianas is a unique race in that it takes competitors atop a mountain range adjourning the deepest point on the face of the earth—the Marianas Trench," said MVA managing director Christopher A. Concepcion. "We are working closely with cycling clubs in the region and our top source markets to raise awareness, excitement, and participation in this year's race, and we're looking forward to a good turnout for this challenging race."

To register, visit webscorer.com and use Race ID 312625.

"We are excited to partner with MVA again to bring back this great event," said NMI Cycling Federation president Vince Seman. "This year, we are introducing a new route due to the Beach Road renovations, including our newest road from Kingfisher to Kalabera Road. As always, we ask our residents to be mindful on the roads as we cheer on our visiting cyclists."

The Hell of the Marianas winds its way through Saipan's hills, valleys, and scenic byways. Participants must navigate 4,900 feet of ascents, including steep climbs and fast descents, making it a true test of endurance and skill. The event is open to both amateur and professional riders. The race has become an important part of Saipan's sporting and cultural scene and has helped raise awareness of the island's unique natural beauty and cultural heritage. Begun in 2007, the Hell is considered the ultimate race with professional athletes arriving from Korea, Japan, China, Taiwan, Russia, Australia, Guam, and elsewhere to participate.

For more information, contact NMI Cycling Federation president Vince Seman at nmicycling@gmail.com. ***(PR)***

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Registration is now open at www.webscorer.com for this year's Hell of The Marianas century cycle on Dec. 2, 2023, in Saipan, The Marianas.

CNMI

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lar situations or who may need future guidance and encouragement."

"I believe that things happen for a reason and that this setback is just a part of my story for when I make my comeback. What I am going through would take a miracle and all the support from people close to me whom I trust most. Going through this journey will allow me to continue to inspire and share my personal experiences to athletes in the CNMI. This setback has opened my eyes to understanding more about myself and is teaching me to deal with situations that are not in my control. At the same time, my current situation is teaching me to stay positive despite the devastating news," said the soccer player of 13 years.

"Your thoughtful assistance and generosity, in any way, would be greatly appreciated as I set out to make a meaningful impact for athletes to follow," he said.

If you have any questions regarding his surgery or would like to get in contact with him, call (670)-484-4483 or email christopheraninzo18@gmail.com.

BUILDING

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use as a drill to practice games because you're not going to run in the game fast and run behind a person. Instead, those drills are what you would use as a warm up."

At the end of each referee and coach session, the focus was on trying to build a pathway for the referees and coaches to not only local tournaments, but hopefully internationally as well. The goal, Lumabi said, is to move them up the ladder from school leagues, to club leagues, then into the national program.

"You're only going to get better when you get out of your comfort zone." Lumabi said they're also on the lookout for more coaches, so the workshops were also a step in that direction.

La Fleur also conducted a coach's workshop for 42 Public School System physical education teachers and coaches. She said, "It was great to see them here. The curriculum taught them that you need to have a practice plan, you need to have activities within it, you need to be an effective teacher, you need to be able to communicate—and I think that just covers all sports."

KEBRUKA

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two triples in the fifth and sixth.

Both teams were tied by the fifth inning, 15-15, and with a six-run sixth inning by Kebruka, they were up 21-17. Home runs weren't the Kebrukas' game as they only had four—but scored via their speed on the bases and taking advantage of Saipal's defense.

Saipal had the last hurrah in the bottom of the last inning. They scored four runs from a home run by Dennis Cruz and a two-out, three-run shot by Tony Tenorio—but with just one more out, they couldn't produce more runs to tie it or take the win.

Blue Jays 17, Seaweed Vibes 2

The Blue Jays outscored Seaweed Vibes, 17-2 in a run-mercy ruled game.

The only runs made by the Seaweed Vibes were solo home runs by Damart Teregeyo in the third inning, and by Mike Iguel in the fourth.

Meanwhile, the Blue Jays had a field day against the Seaweed Vibes pitcher in the second inning when they scored 10. Kier Agda hit a two-run home run, followed by a solo shot from E.J. Cabrera.

By the third period, it was 15-1, and in the last period, Adam Salalila and Willie Cabrera added the last two runs for a 17-run Blue Jays' score.

Just 4 Fun 25, Team Mac 2

Just 4 Fun absolutely destroyed Team Mac, 25-2, in another shortened game. Just 4 Fun's lineup overpowered Team Mac' pitcher Jun Keller from the get-go, scoring 15 runs in the first inning alone. Two more runs came in the second inning, then eight more in the third.

When it seemed that it'll be a shutout game for Just 4 Fun pitcher Nate Camacho, Team Mac's Mac Scaliem finally connected for a two-RBI home run in the third inning.

However, it was too little, too late as that was all they could muster and they lost with a 23-run deficit.

Aimeliik Bat Boys won over PayDayHao via forfeit.

Results of the other games will be posted in the next issues of *Saipan Tribune*.

Jets lose Rodgers to Achilles tendon injury, then rally to stun Bills in OT.

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CNMI national soccer team captain needs help

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

CNMI national soccer team captain and goalkeeper Christopher Aninzo has a scheduled knee surgery on Sept. 25 and is in need of help for the medical costs.

The 23-year-old had undergone an MRI in Japan a couple of weeks ago for an injury he sustained about eight weeks ago during a national game. The results of the MRI indicated a complex knee injury which would highly likely end the career of an athlete.

Aninzo said the MRI specified that his anterior cruciate ligament and posterior cruciate ligament are ruptured and that his medial and lateral meniscus are torn.

"Due to the severity of the injury, I am unable to play soccer unless the knee surgery is performed," said Aninzo.

The surgeon qualified to perform the complex procedure has an availability on Sept. 25, 2023 and surgery cost equate to $30,000. "Although I am doing all I can to save and prepare for this, I am writing to you to ask for your support and advice mentally, prayerfully, and/or financially," he said.

The Gold's Gym personal trainer does not have a GoFundMe account, but is accepting donations via PayPal at christopheraninzo18@gmail.com

Aninzo, also a goalkeeper coach for the national team, remains hopeful and said "If I am able to miraculously undergo this surgery, I hope to share this experience with players who may face simi-

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CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
CNMI national soccer team captain and goalkeeper Christopher Aninzo, center, has a scheduled knee surgery on Sept. 25, and is in need of help for the medical costs.

Kebruka steals win from Saipal, 22-21

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

In a slugfest between Kebruka and Saipal, Kebruka came out on top with a clutch, extended RBI-single by pitcher James Benavente in the last inning of the 2023 Budweiser Belau Amateur Softball Association Slow Pitch Open League last Sunday at the Dan Dan Softball Field.

Benavente was the mainstay in this game as he helped his team offensively despite being pummeled on the mound. He went 5-for-5 with a two-run home run in the third inning and with

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LEIGH GASES
Kebruka's James Benavente is seen in this file photo during one of their games in the 2023 Budweiser Belau Amateur Softball Association Slow Pitch Open League at the Dan Dan Softball Field.

Building pathways for CNMI hoops coaches, referees

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

Annie La Fleur, FIBA Oceania National Federation and Sport Development manager, brought her extensive basketball IQ in the hopes to hand over the necessary tools and training for the Northern Marianas Basketball Federation, its coaches, referees, players, and partners in the CNMI.

Sixteen referees and a handful of coaches took advantage of the workshop in which La Fleur went over the rules and mechanics of two people officiating and three people officiating. She said there can be either two or three referees in the game of basketball, but in the Pacific, they're trying to introduce a three-person format.

She said, "It's a bit new to some of the officials here, but it's something that I think will help them manage the game a little bit better."

La Fleur said the main thing was for them to understand the rules and mechanics, movement on the court, and reporting to the benches.

Northern Marianas Basketball Federation board member Marlene Lumabi said with coaching, La Fleur emphasized that what they want to look into is the game-based aspect. "There were drills—for example—a three-man weave is actually not something you

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CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Northern Mariana Islands Basketball Federation referees and coaches pose for a photo with Annie La Fleur, FIBA Oceania National Federation and Sport Development manager, seated, third from right at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.